

HORRORS BELOW



Horrors Below by reddogf13

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Summary:

after Beverly's return, pennywise works to gain her trust as "Robert Grey" while also avoiding the cold rains of April. when unintentionally Beverly convinces him to question his very existence. what has lead him to become the monster so many children fear was below their beds? what will he do when he no longer wants to be that monster? can a monster truly become a human?

1. Welcome home



Rain fell hard upon the bedroom window darkening its once clear view. the bright flash of lightning across the stormy skies blaring down through water streaked glass. Inside the sheltered bedroom was Beverly, sleeping peacefully on her bed. Far too exhausted from her recent travels from LA back to home town of Derry. She had no chance to notice the lingering horror hiding below her bed. Unaware of how vulnerable her hand hung limply over the edge.

Fiery glowing eyes intently staring toward the delicious treat. Belonging to a clown all dressed in silver grinning widely with inhuman, slim, jagged teeth. Twisted unnaturally in the small under space of the girls cozy bed. Drops of drool splattering onto the bare wood floors to collect in puddles. The creature not worrying a bit of the dripping noise he was causing. The heavy rain draining all the sounds away under its deep rumble in the night.

He waited so long to get back at all those children, but one by one they moved right after their high school graduation. The clown Pennywise, known as *IT*, having assumed he would never see them again. That changed now that Beverly marsh, the girl who caused him pain by an iron rod shoved through his eye, had returned. He **HAD** to wake early to take his chance of revenge. Risking his weakened state of a body to joyfully terrorize her in the night. Planning to yank her under the dark cramped space to maul right into her horrified face. Enjoying her dying screams let out between

his crushing jaws of death.

Excitedly stretching out his white gloved hand toward the hanging arm. Licking the drool dripping off his many rows of fangs. A flash of light tensing him by the sudden touch of Beverly grasping his hand. taking a gentle hold of the throat ready to pull her under as a live meal. He froze at first thinking she had awakened early from her deep slumber. Untensing at seeing no other movement that would suggest so.

The clown growled at the touch, pulling his hand back in attempt of breaking free. Finding it difficult without using more aggressive force without waking her. He did not want her to wake by him freeing himself of her stupid hand. Didn't want to give her spare time to become aware that something was wrong. Give her the time to fight like he mistakenly allowed before. He wasn't going to make the same mistake like last time!

She woke in his lair, tried to run, he had all the power over her, but in the end she wasn't afraid. Her flesh in his mouth wouldn't be as satisfying if he ate her right then and there. He had to break her in his lights. Twist her into a delicious meal before his long hibernation. Then it all fell apart when those boys jumped to her rescue. Somehow pulling her from the twisted environment he assumed trapped her like all his other victims. Ending on them all beating him back despite all his powers to cause fear.

"Pfft, I'll wait." he growled to himself. "she'll let go and I can try again. Simple." resting himself to the ground without much else to do.

Beginning to stare around the room that hadn't changed since the day she left. A small vanity desk across from her bed covered in pink frilly sheets. A dresser so old the paint was peeling off at the corners. A tall full form mirror coated in so much dust it couldn't be used unless scrubbed. Books covered in dust piled around the room next to old dusty toy figures. Old posters faded from the sun pouring in after many years. A faded wall spot would surely be under them if moved.

It had been 7 years since she left Derry to live with her aunt. On account of her father going mad that same day. A failed attempt at

scaring her to be more of a meal. From her aunt's place she moved on to college someplace in California for fashion. Hard times forcing her to return back to her dad's door step. At least that's the summary he got from spying on the conversation between her and her dad. Her aunt seeming to have kicked the bucket leaving no other choices of living space. Her dad happily accepting her back into the home at 3 in the morning.

Meanwhile her dad being less of a threat now that he was crippled. That porcelain block to the head didn't only leave a little bump, after all. To this day he still has trouble walking for more than a minute. Remembering things or keeping a firm grip on a simple coffee cup. Trapped in this puny apartment on disability checks for a depressing income. His old job as a janitor long gone after he could no longer mop the floors. Having his daughter back to care for him must have been a loving sight in his eyes.

“how long will this take?” grumbling at the hand still holding his. “biting it may give the same effect. Gnaw off the hand like a trapped dog would. Only it wouldn't be mine.” clacking his teeth together in temptation. “no, still not as fun.” staring to her hand when she gave him a light squeeze. Through his gloves he could still feel the softness of her skin. The warmth surrounding his cold hand off hers. It interested him somehow that she was holding on so long. He'd seen humans holding hands affectionately that he felt was stupid.

lightly squeezing her hand back. “why do it? Such an unnecessary thing unless its to keep them from running away.” Begrudgingly enjoying the heat she was transferring to him.

He lived in dark cold tunnels underground, but that didn't mean he hated heat. He worked quite a bit to make his nest warm under a pile of hoarded toys. Stuffed animals forming most the piles hollowed out core. Naturally he was cold blooded until he focused energy to create his own heat. An exhausting task when done 24/7 that ultimately wasn't worth it. He wouldn't die from the cold, but would if all his energy was spent for comforting warmth. Relying on that skylight above allowing natural warm sunlight to heat his nest. Something that thundering storms like this ruined by their gloomy cloud cover. He honestly hated storms that infested the month of April.

All the humans would lock themselves inside buildings, no warmth of the sun on his nest, lucky to find one human out doing tasks. It was an annoying time to push through before the hot summer kicked in a month later. Summer time was the best hunting season with the fairgrounds returning his favorite none meat treats. Unfortunately there were still 4 weeks of stormy April to deal with first. Even the winter storms weren't nearly as bad as the rains. At least children would be out making snowmen, igloos, and having snowball fights.

Grumbling over noticing that the thunderstorm had ended. "this night has been ruined." The blue morning light invading the room to wake the girl for her new classes.

Beverly slipping her hand away in turning over in bed. The clown below glaring at his empty hand as if insulted by it. Agitated that the warmth he was leeching off her was stolen from him. unmoving to from his spot underneath to consider his options of the situation.

"tomorrow." thinking to himself. "Being startled by me now wouldn't season her much. I should enjoy this, after all." crossing his arms underneath his chin. Having nothing else to do to leave for or anything more entertaining he didn't bother to move. Hearing her alarm eventually go off on her bed stand. Watching her get up to freshly redress for the day. Scenting the moments of fear sparking off as she glanced at the bedroom door. Stuffing things into a backpack to then stand frozen in front of the door. Curiosity over her actions catching *IT's* full attention. Absorbed into how she took a deep breath to gather the energy to simply open the door. When she left, the clown followed out into the living room. Spying hidden within an old family photo of the fair hanging on the wall. Catching the wave of fear flowing off her when he heard her talking with her father.

The man sitting in a comfy armchair in front of a large box TV. While she stayed a distance away in the small hall off to the side leading to the front door. Her father looking over twice his age with graying hair. A noticeable scar marking the side of his head being a forever reminder literally marking the day Beverly stood up for herself. Even though she could physically see that moment she still acted small under her father's gaze. The look he gave her being that of a hungry wolf hunting its prey.

His voice rough when speaking to her so early in the morning. “not going to give your old man a hug?” voice oozing sweetness in a poor attempt at hiding his real intentions.

she hurried the discussion along. “I have to go or I'll be late.” Practically flying out the door to get away from his presence.

“interesting.” Pennywise taking note of the situation. “still afraid of her father. Waiting a little longer wouldn't be too bad in that case. Maybe another day of this fear will have her ready.” drooling at the lovely thought of her soaked in fear. His body fading to the blackness on the intention of returning later.

Between his stalking rounds, throughout the day, he would spy on her. Watching her attend the community college of Derry that offered many courses there. Working at a bench using a sewing machine on dresses in the long fashion classes. Talking between a few classmates she was friendly with as the day went on. Lots of topics he didn't care for on fabric or color that, that her teachers spoke on and on about. The only moment of entertainment he caught was the meeting with her college counselor. Discussing her sudden transfer after questionable attendance in her other college. The show was short lived after Beverly explained her aunts death that required her to uproot her life. Returning back to dull lectures *IT* couldn't stand to sit through for another moment.

When she returned home he was soon to follow. Spying out from under the bed in the hopes she would have more fear. Finding that to not be the case as she began work on a sewing machine she brought home. Spending far longer on it into the night over a reasonable bedtime. The work internally calming her from the harmful environment she was trapped in.

“go to bed already.” he grumbled in thought. Going on the hopes that she would at least suffer some nightmares. A knock on her door startling her into bumping the machine, letting out a hard buzzing noise. The room oddly silent afterwards as if making a noise would kill her. Not answering right away to take a deep breath.

Her voice overly soft when answering the knock. “yes?” she asked toward the closed door. Lovely fear building up all over again

creating a grin on the clowns face.

her father shouted on the other side of the door. “turn that damn machine off! I am trying to fucking sleep!”

“okay.” waiting for him to leave before looking back down to her fabric. Untangling it from the machine to hold it up. Sighing at her beautiful sowing work suddenly skewing off in a jagged mess. She grabbed a pair of nearby scissors to carefully snip the unfortunate line away. Tending to it carefully in making sure the mistake made wasn't noticeable.

IT watching her use flimsy needle and thread to finish the rest of the work. Spending the next few hours this way. “I could do better.” he judged in thought over the threaded weaving. Looking to her alarm clock reading 4:31AM. She was meant to wake in only 2 more hours.

“another day wasted.” attention turned back to her setting everything away. Sluggishly walking to bed in settling down for the remaining night. As soon as she switched off her bedside light she was out like a rock. Her arm limply hanging over the edge In front of the clown feeling as if he was being mocked.

“this girl is testing me. The little fear she felt here and there still isn't enough. I'll have to keep being patient.” gaze locked on the tempting arm. His patients tested further at the sound of rain freshly tapping the window. Grumbling at the same freezing cold that would surely fill his nesting area. At least staying here provided some warmth from Beverly being so near.

“not much.” feeling the weak warmth hitting his back. Focusing forward back to her hand in front of his face. Thinking back on the warmth he was able to take the last time. Hesitantly he reached out his hand to wrap around hers. Being gently held back by her warm soft hand had him easing to settle down. Tolerating the cold for the rest of the morning before she had to wake.

He watched her do the morning routine of getting dressed, grabbing her bags, and that long wait in front of the door. The oozing of fear the entire time she rushed to keep the conversation short with her dad. *IT* going his separate way to find another meal. Visiting the

Derry college to momentarily spy on her again. Her work sluggish from lack of sleep. Hiding it when talking to her new friends she had recently made. When she returned home he was sure she would immediately head to bed.

Excitedly following her more closely into the house. Noticing before she did that her father was waiting to ambush her in the kitchen for a talk. Excited for the show, Pennywise spied from his high point hidden in the fair family photo. Drooling from the wonderful smell of fear as she passed her father. Grin twisting upwards on his face when her father called her back down the hall.

“so close.” the clown mocked at the sight of Beverly's hopes of sanctuary being crushed. Enjoying the show of her hesitantly returning to the kitchen.

“yes?” her voice soft around her father.

“we need to talk.” her father's tone grimly serious. “how long do you plan to live here?”

“ ... only a semester. ...hopefully.” the last part barely hear able.

“thaaats quite a few months then, right?”

her answer souring. “ ... yes. 3 months.” obviously hating how long she would be stuck in the apartment.

“you understand it's hard paying for two, right? I can't work like I used to since my skull cracked. You remember that **accident** in the bathroom.” his tone heavy on the last bit. “something needs to be worked out. Don't you agree?” taking an unwanted hold of her hand. She flinched away from the touch.

her soft tone twisting to something more defiant. “i remember. That **accident** would have got you in jail, but we agreed on something else.”

“yes, that you move and keep your mouth shut. That was a while ago. Things are different now that you're back home under my roof.” a smirk easing onto his face.

boldly speaking back to him. "I'll find a job. Paying rent should be enough, **right?**" The mans smirk dropping, but not his hard glare.

sounding disappointed. "i guess." It wasn't the answer the man wanted, he was aiming for something *more*. "I forget how grown my little girl is." voice disgustingly sweet. "You look so much like your mother. Soft hair, smooth skin, all looking so lovely. I am sure you won't mind helping a crippled old man in the house either, will you?" approaching her. She swallowed a lump of disgust building in her throat.

"if I am free of class work." holding back all her disgusted rage. "which I need to get started on." leaving to go hide in her room. Inside the small space the clown watched from his spot under the bed. Her locking the door first before stumbling to her vanity dresser. Wheezing through each breath to prevent herself from crying.

All the wonderful fear built up replaced by useless anger. The clown slumping under her bed ready to rip his hair out. When Beverly pulled herself together she started on her work. Sowing a new dress through the night. Another storm raging outside flashing lightning across the sky. Hours later into the black night the room flickered. having Beverly stop to stare wide eyed at her ceiling light in panic.

"no!" she exclaimed at the mass flickering light before the power shut off. She growled at the ceiling, defeated, machine unable to work now. Forced into bringing out the classic thread and needle to once again sow overnight the long way. Under the narrow cone of light from a flashlight held in her mouth to even see.

IT waiting slumped over himself under the bed. He was going to get something out of this situation. Coming up with the idea of completely waiting for the end of April. Surely by then she would be full of enough fear and in the meantime he would have something warm throughout the cold stormy nights.

"now if she'd only sleep." checking the time of the clock. 1:00AM. "how long was it humans could go without sleep?" trying to recall a humans limits.

A few more hours passed before she started setting stuff away. Falling

into bed without bothering to switch her bedside lamp off before knocking out. When the clown was sure of her being asleep he took her hand, her grip tighter than usual. Holding on to him as if he was a badly needed comfort in her sleep. He tolerated it as long as it gave him warmth.

From that day on, he fell into a routine. The morning came, she left for classes he practically attended himself to spy on her. Her returns home interrupted by looking for a job. Then making it home for fearful talks with her father over the job situation. home work almost through the entire night and finally bed. This was the routine for the next 3 days. On the fourth day he stopped following her as she went job hunting. Taking time to find a few meals caught out in the rain. A couple of men having the worst luck today of their truck caught in the thick mud. They didn't last long enough to call anyone for a tow.

The now abandoned trucks insides coated in blood. The clown happily tearing chunks of meat off a severed arm. Sitting in the seat next to him were two body's stripped to the bone in a gory pile. Finishing off the last scraps of meat from the bone he tossed it away. The bloody bone clinking off the exposed rib cage down to the trucks floor. Licking up the blood coating his hands. Cleaning off the last of it using a bit of manipulation to the liquids existence.

"Beverly should be home by now doing work." gazing over his arm for possibly any blood left behind. Dubbing himself officially clean he headed back to her home. Scurrying low to the ground in the form of a rat. Avoiding any attention along the way up to her apartment door.

He didn't even make it inside yet when the scent of blood hit him. Shrugging it off at first as the smell being stuck to him from the meal not too long ago. sneaking under the house doors however, had him learning it was definitely not. Head turning upwards to the source finding it to be Beverly's father holding a bag of frozen peas over one black eye. Spitting blood into the nearby kitchen sink already covered in red. Having been leaning over the sink for a bit of time now since his injury's. Looking more thoroughly, Pennywise could see the man covered in more bruises. Lined by scrapes all over any exposed skin past his short sleeved shirt.

"Fuckin brat." the man poured a shot of whiskey. Taking care to hold it close over the counter in case it slipped through his weak hand. Another aggressively red mark shown covering the same hand swollen to a large size. Fingers stiff from obvious pain while a few others now had homemade splints.

IT laughed at the man's misery. "the dumb fool doesn't learn." scurrying off down the hall to check on Beverly. He wanted to see how scuffed up she was compared to her dad. A little surprised to see her room dark as she already was in bed asleep. Normally shed be working for quite a while after returning home. He twisted his body from being a small rat to his full clown height to loom over her. Examining her injuries closely off his morbid curiosity.

Bruises covering her arm in the form of distinct hand prints. A cut lip under her, now dry, bloody nose that left a speckle of blood on her pillow. The collar of her shirt stained as well in the dried blood splotches. Obvious marks of her being in a scuff, but nothing serious like the ones she gave her father. He snickered at the thought of her still being here and sleeping at that. It was so stupid of her to continue living here next to a threat that could come for her another time.

Joking with himself by that. "oh, look who's talking. What extraordinary predator sleeps by prey for some warmth?" about to back away from her when she grabbed him into a hug. Locking up in reaction to her holding onto him like a teddy bear. Her arms wrapped around his neck while her face buried into his ruffled collar. By how tight she was holding him he couldn't slip away without waking her. Forced to stick by her until her grip loosened.

His grumbling over being trapped stopped by one of her hands gently petting him. Smoothing her hand back and forth in a short space. He so badly wanted to snap off the very hand out of retaliation. How dare some weak human treat him like a household pet. Even worse was he enjoyed the soothing treatment. Holding back from letting out a deep content purr that could wake her.

"i am not being petted. I don't get petted. I am worshiped as a god. This is a way of being worshiped that I am allowing." working to twist it into something he can tolerate better. Shutting his eyes to the

warm hand he eventually allowed himself to purred along to. Relaxing his on guard body into nesting down a little more against her. Chest laying against hers his tall length making it easy to sit down without pulling away.

“At least this close contact is giving far more warmth then hand holding under the bed.” hearing fresh rain coat the window over her bed. Being so close to her he eventually caught the light scent of sunflowers on her. Questioning if that was her real scent or a made up one in those disgusting bottles humans loved spraying so much. Either way he quite liked the scent on her. Enjoying the closeness all the more through the night.

At one point she started to wake early in the night. Loosening her grip enough for Pennywise to slip free back under the bed. Watching from his low view how she sluggishly rose off the bed to head out of her room. Hearing her walk down the hall to take some time in the bathroom before returning. Looking cleaner of blood then when she left with her once bloody collar a bit damp. She sat on her bed in silence where he couldn't see her expression. She got back up to pull an unfinished dress from her bag to set up on her vanity desk. Starting work with her needle and thread to finish a long pinned together seem.

he judged from under the bed. “ugh, that dumb threading.” Missing the warm attention he was getting a few minutes ago. “why would she have to wake now? When it's the coldest hours of the night.” unintentionally clawing into the wood floor boards beneath him.

She worked the entire time up to her alarm going off. Packing things carefully into her bag for the school day. Pennywise was sluggish on going out into the rainy weather. Going back and forth on staying below the bed all day or attempting to hunt in the storm. Without any heat left in the room from Beverly he went out. Stalking the flooded streets around the most populated areas for an unsuspecting meal.

Lurking in the drains as humans walked between stores. Waiting for one to make a fatal mistake of breaking away from the crowd. Attention hooked by a can of food falling through a ruined paper bag soaked by the water falling. The poor human determined to get their

simple food back driven closer to the storm drain. Closer and closer as they rushed in a reach down to stop the can disappearing down. They didn't notice the bright glowing predatory eyes of hunger. All the more making an easy meal as the clown lunged out. A clawed hand hooking into the human to yank them right down into the dark tunnels. Not a soul around to see the disappearance taking place nor hear the screams under the thundering storm. Another human added to the mass list of those gone missing in the small town of Derry.

Pennywise grimaced at the cardboard tasting meat he worked to chew through. "can't wait for the fair to come. Some good meat walking around seasoned perfectly by the high rides." Taking his time to work around the awful taste unsuccessfully. Slowing down his devouring of the fresh prey on each bite tasting worse than the last. Reaching the point where he couldn't eat anymore of the disgusting meal. Snarling at the meat he was going to waste while meals were already difficult to snag.

Trying to get through the day was a chore for him. Hunting for a better meal failing miserably with the storms thrashing powerful winds forcing the rains sideways. Down into a painful sting that made all things rush to the safety of warm indoors. Giving up on it all as soon as he knew Beverly would be home to warm the room. Slipping under the front door as a rat loving that the whole house was darkened for him to easily slip by.

Pausing at noticing Beverly's father sitting in the living room chair. Appearing more beat up then when he last saw the man. "did the fool really fight again? That short memory really comes in handy." mocking along his way to Beverly's room.

Starring toward the door he approached slowing to a stop. Listening to the crying sobs on the other side of the door. He smelled the air at the doors base for what Beverly's condition could be. How injured was she made this time? The air had no fresh scent of blood or any fear. Slipping under the door now to check on her physical state more closely. Noticing her roughed up again, but nothing that caught his attention as serious. Observing her cry into her arms at the vanity desk when a ringing sounded from her pocket. Beverly wiping away her tears in preparation of answering her flip phone. Clearing her throat as she flipped it open in a quick snap.

"yes?" speaking as calmly as she could. "... yeah I'll definitely make it no, I don't need a ride ... yeah, I am sure ... okay, meet you there. Bye." snapping her cellphone shut. Taking a deep breath with a shove of her phone back into her pocket.

The hidden rats whiskers twitched at the conversation. "hmm, going where? Must not be far if she needs no transportation. Some stupid school trip I missed during the *thrilling* lectures?" sarcastic thoughts filling his head around the matter. "what could they possibly be doing? Touring the fabric factory's? Hope some poor thing doesn't die of excitement from it all."

the rat scurrying to hide under her desk before he was seen as Beverly rose up. She walked straight to bed where she buried her face in the pillows. Switching off her light without a glance up toward it. The room so quiet that he didn't dare move. Concerned that she would hear his small steps tapping across the wooden floor. He waited until he was sure of her being fully asleep. Moving along the wall to slip underneath her bed where his body twisted out into his more regular form. Outreaching his hand toward hers to hold for that pleasing warmth. Hand left hovering by at the thought of simple hand holding not being enough, he wanted more.

He enjoyed being pett- ... worshiped with affection. Crawling out from under the bed to glance over her sleeping form. Now how was he exactly to do this? Looming over her in thought at what he should do. Gently settling his chin on her shoulder to bring up some reaction from her. It worked, her arms wrapping around to hug him closer. Burying her face again in his ruffled collar like she wanted to hide in it from the world. He purred at the embrace warming him thinking this so easy a thing to do. The dreary rains of April will fly by if he kept this up.

So wrapped up in the idea that he didn't pay any attention to the red flags that morning. Beverly woke and packed all her things away on top of what was already in her bags. Going further to shove in a few things from around the room. Pennywise assumed it was a human thing to bring comforts on a trip. They were all sheep too afraid to leave the herd for long without some sort of comfort. For good reason they should be afraid to be alone in Derry. Especially for her unknowing to the mark looming over her head.

She left then he left to hunt the day away. Annoyingly fighting with the stormy rains while searching for one small meal to snatch. The rains going on longer throughout the day meant even less prey going out. Soon he'd have to hold on the hunting altogether as rain turned to hail and finally a bit of snow. He returned back to her home assuming she'd be back by now. Remembering then that she was off on a trip.

"oh well. May as well stay here where it's dry. She'll return soon." settling himself under her bed. The next day seemed no different. Hunting to later return home, but Beverly was still not yet back. "still on her trip? What is she doing? How much fabric factory do they need a tour of?" settling under her bed. The third day of her not being around becoming a nuisance. Then the 4th day came and he had enough of this waiting. Searching everywhere for her along the usual path she took to school. Even on campus she was not around in her classes.

"where is she?!" He growled inside her empty room. Even her father seemed to have no idea where she went or even cared. An idea hit him of where she went causing a pain to seize his chest of realizing he may have failed his ultimate hunt. "did she leave Derry?" After searching frantically the remaining daylight away he managed to unintentionally find her. The night sky revealing a bright glow of a campfire far off into the woods.

"what moron is camping in the woods as it rains so heavily?" he thought when first spotting the camp. Taking a momentary detour of his search to scope out the spot. "i could snag a dumb meal before continuing my search." stalking up to the campfire. Discovering Beverly speaking among a group of friends. Giggling around the fire between 3 other girls roasting food on sticks.

The clown tapped his fingers against the bark of a tree. Clawing into it to mark rows across it. "so this is where she has been. Spending all this time in wet woods for what?" leaving another claw mark. Spying on the group from far off between the dark damp trees.

One of the girls checking over a half roasted hot dog before continuing to roast it. Turning her attention to Beverly in the meantime. "see, told you camping was a great stress killer. Even if it

is raining cats and dogs.”

“yeah, you were right.” Beverly nodded, checking on a burnt marshmallow she was roasting. “feels great to escape ... it all.” the smile on her face faltering for just a moment. Hiding it by eating the marshmallow off her stick.

another girl chuckling as she started eating as well. “sucks we gotta get back to school tomorrow. You got everything packed right? Aside from your tent. Need help packing it tomorrow?” taking another bite of food.

“no, I got everything. Honestly I am gonna leave everything here and grab it on the way back home.”

the third girl speaking up. “you sure about that? What if somebody steals your stuff?”

“ha, nothing of mine is worth taking.” stabbing another marshmallow on the roasting stick. The first girl standing up into a wide stretch of her arms.

“welp, I am going to bed, night girls.” throwing her stick into the fire. The other girls sitting nearby letting out yawns of agreement.

“same here, night guys.” Beverly stretched to her feet with a wave goodnight on the way to her tent.

The clown slumped against the nearby tree grumbling to himself. “At least she'll be returning tomorrow and I'll get my warmth back.” forced to return back to his nesting pile for now.

The morning came and went, finishing his spying as she went off to school. Another poor hunt of a human caught in the rain. Returning early to wait for Beverly under the bed. He waited and waited, but no sign of her came.

“ugh, where is this girl?” coming out from under the bed. It was far too late for her to be at school, or anywhere for that matter. Reading the clock he saw the flashing time of 10:56 PM. “still camping?” he wondered. Heading off into the woods at the campsite she stayed. For some reason she was still there and all her belongings left unpacked.

Even more curious was her working on a dress by the campfire.

“why doesn't she go home to bed? Wouldn't it be better to sow there?” posting up against a tree with a cross of his arms. She sowed for hours to finish the dress. Cooking a small meal of instant noodles on the fire before bed. A boring show that kept him waiting for her to pack. “she said all her things were packed. Why aren't they? Is she not planning to return home?” fingers tapping rhythmically across his arms in thinking. “this won't do, no place to hide inside the tent, I'll have to sneak in some other way to leech her warmth.” standing away from the trees. “humans held hands all the time during that ... dating time. I'll just turn human and request her to date. Heh, this will be far easier than sneaking around as she slumbers.” smiling to himself at his clever thinking.

“see you for our date tomorrow Beverly.” Walking off into the night to perfectly plan for tomorrow's meeting.

A storm thundered across Derry blotting out the sun. The college campus suffering the most under the storm. puddles creeping under the doors to flood the lower classrooms. Needing to be relocated to higher ground for them to continue. One affected class being Beverly's as they all scrambled to save the electric sewing machines. highly valuable fabrics also needing protection from the rising water. Requesting aid of the main office to help with transportation of heavy materials.

Pennywise, freshly disguised, hid away in the new fabrics closet location. The students dropping things off were separated from each other in large gaps. he saw his chance to approach Beverly in the rush back and forth. Being separated from all the others allowing a private chat in the dark storage. A flash of lightning as Beverly entered hid his presence from her in the moment.

Approaching from the darkened corner to gleefully greet her. “hello Beverly.” his sudden appearance having her jump. She wasn't expecting any body to be hanging out in the darkened fabrics closet.

The presence of the stranger putting her on guard. “hello?” answering

out of politeness, but not wanting to stay and talk. Aside from being all around intimidating, to her, something wasn't right about him. Staring down unblinking with blue steel grey eyes. Watching her every movement through them on a deadpan expression. Knowing her name yet she'd never seen him before on campus. All of that convincing her to keep holding onto the large fabric roll in her arms. Something to keep them separated if he tried anything.

He had massive muscles on his towering height of 7 feet. bright red hair in a neatly slicked back look contrasting against his perfect pale skin. Clothes far too out of place on the young man, as if they were from over a century old. Wearing a tight dark vest over a white shirt mostly hidden under a dark brown leather duster coat. Dark pants leading down to black heavy boots.

His expression changed to a wide smile making her even more uncomfortable. It was the exact reason why he was smiling. Enjoying the fact he was scaring her without need of a complicated form. He could read her like a book on all her feelings. The twitches, the side glances, and all the scents flowing off her to make easier judgments on what to do.

She swallowed nervously before speaking to break the tense air forming. "do I know you?" asking to figure out the stranger. A name to give campus security, or police, would be nice to have as well.

"mm." he hummed in glancing to the side. Thinking of what to answer with. " ...once ... we've met. Many years ago." speaking boldly in knowing she would never guess it was him.

"oh, uh, sorry. I don't really remember you." seeing in her eyes she was searching for an escape from him.

"I didn't think you would. Our meeting was quite brief." chuckling on the old memories. Having to hold back more laughter as she fidgeted in front of him.

"was nice seeing you again. ... I uh, have to finish moving some stuff-" her wrapping up of the meeting ended by him interrupting.

"will you go on a date with me?" he outright asked.

“no.”

he didn't expect her to answer that. “no?!” he questioned a little too aggressively. “why no?!” insulted at being rejected.

“already dating.” answer blurting out quickly. He thought at first she was lying, but her eyes said it was the truth.

“who?!” he snapped. The two separated by other students walking in together holding a huge roll of fabric. Carrying the long roll at its each ends. Beverly stuffed her fabric onto the nearest shelf before bolting away to freedom out into the storm. He let out a long hiss of displeasure following out into the rain. “already taken? I'll fix that!” thinking that he needed to find the damn male she was dating to drag them off into the sewers. Wouldn't be too hard if he kept up with her around campus. Between here and her tent she didn't stop anywhere else. Watching her from the sidelines as she went through her classes. Then he saw the male blocking his plans. Labeling him the one at seeing how Beverly greeted him by Hugging with disgusting kisses. Using the form of a rat he approached closer to listen in on their conversation.

“you coming to the party tonight?” the male asked.

“David, I said I cant. I got so much work to catch on after that camping trip.”

“come on, we've barely hung out together. You said so yourself we should have another date soon. Since our last date was cut short because your dad called throwing a fit. Then the other one we skipped due to school. We can hang out at the party. Really get to talk about what we like and stuff.”

“... okay, for a couple hours.” her tone not sounding the most thrilled. The rat hiding by sure was however. A crowded party in the night having all the goers too drunk to notice somebody going missing. A perfect time to make a competitor vanish out of sight.

The rat smirked. “a date for tonight then.” spending the rest of the day waiting. When the night came he followed Beverly from her new “home” to join up with the male at a diner nearby. Picked up in a

rusted rickety old car to drive barely 10 minutes down the streets. Stopping in front of a rich kids mini mansion covered in flashing lights swarming with drunk college students. Pennywise had only been here a second after Beverly and her boyfriend's arrival and already he despised the place. Hating how idiotic drunks kept acting like fools. The loud annoying music blasting around from screeching stereos. Needing to tune them out for the hunt he was actively on.

Walking through the crowds so easily without anyone giving him attention. As if the stranger no one knew didn't exist at all. Staring intently above the rest to stalk the annoying male hanging around Beverly. Ready to pluck him off as soon as a mistake was made. Going off alone for a drink or possibly separated by the dancing drunkard crowds. The clown saw his chance to approach when the male left to grab another drink.

"hello there." he greeted in the same disguise he approached Beverly in.

"hey there." the boy listlessly replied.

"not having any fun?" smiling down on him.

"ugh, no. my girlfriend keeps wanting to leave and we've only been here for 10 minutes."

"aww, such a shame." playing along to the males discontent. "I know a place to gather for a bit of fun not far from here."

"oh yeah? Doing what exactly?"

"a bit of betting in a group."

"betting over what?"

"it's super simple really. A challenge to see who will enter the dark drainage pipe connected down the stream. I've seen a couple do it for an easy \$50." tempting the poor sap on false promises of money.

"hmp, is that all? You know i've heard something that eats people lives down there. Like a massive crocodile that was flushed down the toilet once."

“you don't say?” not caring for whatever the male was rambling about. “does that mean you're too scared for the dare?”

“naw, i'll take the stupid dare for 50 bucks, but you have to show me the money first.” this male really annoying him. The waiting was grinding his patients down apparently the same for how Beverly was feeling. Spotting her approach he disappeared back into the crowd.

“David I really have to go home now! Its late, I have work to do before class tomorrow!” she begged the boy around the snack bar.

“can you stop being a Debby downer? Ever since we got here you've been wanting to leave. You still hadn't talked to me despite anything I ask. I ask if I can drive you home after class, no answer. I ask if I can meet your dad, no answer. I ask if we'll ever get a proper date, but you don't seem to want that either. Do you really want to date me?” sounding done after her constantly asking to leave. The crowd surrounding them not noticing the argument except for a pair of blue eyes.

“i do! I have a lot going on and it's hard to focus right now. Please David, take me home. I'll make it up later, okay.” watching her boyfriend sigh.

“fine.” tossing his half empty cup onto the lawn as Beverly followed behind on the way back to the car. Unknowingly being followed by someone else on their drive. Curiosity peeking when the car stopped in the middle of town. Muffled arguing heard from the car then Beverly stepping out. The male shouting from inside. “you can fucking walk home! I am tired of you keeping secrets, its over!”

“asshole!” she shouted back as he slammed his car door. Making a fast U turn back toward the party. Beverly left walking alone through the deserted town under the clouded night sky. Flashes of lightning warning of an oncoming pour down.

The disguised creature grinning from the shadows across the street. “looks like my job was made much easier.” following not too far behind as Beverly walked down her street side. The fresh falling rain drowning out his precise steps when approaching.

Eyes locking onto two other new following figures. "what?" he stopped midway between the street to glare at two other male figures catching up with her. "friends of hers?" annoyed at his approach being complicated again. He didn't want others around to interfere.

They managed to stop her by asking a question. "you got a phone?" one asked.

"we've gotten stuck out here in the rain. Did you get stuck out here to?" the other questioned. Beverly gave no answer to the two. Both men being far too eager to learn she was out with no ride or a phone.

making up a story as best she could. "I have a friend waiting for me. If I am late, she'll be upset." Against the fresh rain he could smell the fear coming off her. They weren't any friends of hers like he first thought. She didn't like these men, which made him not like them either. Taking a slightly different approach to step into the situation. He appeared out of nowhere in a flash of lightning. draping an arm around Beverly in a dominating claim over her.

Greeting her again. "hello Beverly." Having himself give off the sweet scent of cinnamon rolls to fake a comforting aura about him. Calming her body that flinched at his touch at first when he hugged her to his side. Letting him do so at least only for protection against these other males. Looking over her expressions he could see she was still far too afraid.

thinking off her reaction. "thinks I am with them?" he challenged the males in a cold stare down. "who are these two?" Knowing full well they were as terrified of him as Beverly was of them.

"I don't know." hearing her answer quietly. The two males shrinking away under his unbroken stare. Smart enough to know they weren't getting their prey now.

"let's go home." directing her along without giving her the chance to argue against it. The two men left behind to disappear from their sight. Once they were gone she started to speak up for herself.

"thanks, I uh, can walk the rest of the way." pulling away from the side hug, which he allowed. Beverly walking further ahead of him to

create some distance. Another thing he didn't push to keep her from getting scared off.

Yet still insisted on walking her. "oh no, you shouldn't be out so late while alone. Don't you remember the curfew? Bad things happen in Derry and I couldn't take the guilt if you disappeared." hiding his displeasure of losing the warmth he had so close.

"what are you doing out so late then?" tone leaking suspicion.

"cant sleep is all while that loud party plays looking like a rave. I've also forgot to mention my name." going down in a halfway bow of showing off. "I am Robert grey, simply grey is fine." his unusually wide smile not easing her worry.

Not recognizing his name she brought up what he mentioned last time. "where exactly did we meet before?"

"around Derry, in a few places, actually. I've been gone for quite a while only now coming back."

"heh, I recently came back too." giving off a nervous chuckle.

"so I've heard. I had to see you again after so long once I found out."

"y-yeah did I see you in school?"

"heh heh, no ... I was homeschooled, strictly." making up a cover. Laughing mainly on the inside at her attempts at guessing.

"the park?"

"maybe in glimpses, but never a meeting. Same for a lot of places around here."

"tell me where we've met then."

"oohhhh." he smiled at her getting frustrated. "it's really not that important."

"... kinda strange." she muttered. "can't make conversation when you barely know someone."

“you're one to talk. I heard you don't like sharing things about yourself either.”

he saw her tense up at the claim striking a nerve. “do I have to?” Shooting him an offended glare.

still smiling he shook his head. “no, I don't mind secrets. What's one more in little ole Derry, Right?” knowing how her ex demanded answers he knew not to question her. Neither did he need to, anyway, when he saw all and knew all that happened in Derry. The many secrets this small town hid from the world that it didn't matter what else was added to its closet of skeletons.

her body relaxing off his answer. “yeah ... my home is not too far now. I should make it from here, without you.” subtly trying to hint she didn't want him to follow.

knowing how close her tent was he didn't argue. “if you're sure.” stopping his steps at a curbs end.

She fidgeted her sleeves in her hands as she stood a few steps ahead. Turning back to look at him. “... thanks, for helping me back there. I'll try to return the favor somehow.” giving her best shot of a not so nervous smile.

“go on a date with me?” he asked without any hesitation. Enjoying her squirming reaction by the uncomfortable question.

“I can, go on one.” answering hesitantly. “ a small one, after class.”

“small one after class is fine.” which it was as long as he got into her good graces. Opening up for easier physical contact for warmth. “wish to meet at a diner? I'll be happy to get you something.” aiming for something she really wanted, food. Having watched her eat instant noodles for the past few days, she would surely want something else.

“that's fine.” sounding a lot more excited for the date. “I'll see you there after my classes. Somewhere around 5:00pm.”

“see you there.” waving goodbye on there separation. Going only far enough to leave her view. Coming back around to hide by her place

of rest. Watching her eat another pot of instant noodles. Then spend hours on sewing fabrics before bedtime in almost the sunny morning hours.

Waiting through the day to immediately pounce her for the anticipated meeting. Walking across flooded grass lawns of the college campus. The sky darkened black that it was a surprise to everyone in Derry that the rain had not rushed down yet. Coming up to her last class exiting, straight to Beverly, as she walked beside her classmates. Almost jumping out of her skin when he appeared through another flash of lightning along the choppy clouds.

Rain falling hard right after his appearance as if an omen of dread.

She froze in surprise that he found her so easily. By her reaction he could read that she did not expect him. Another part hinting disappointment that he did manage to find her somehow.

Giving his unsettling smile. "ready for our date?" holding himself back from snickering at her giving a shaky breath.

her voice oozing anxiety about this situation. "ah, y-yeeeah."

"want to hold hands on the way?" offering his hand out before she could answer. She, with another nervous breath of air, took his hand. Anyone else would see her doing this out of obligation to not be rude. Be accepting that she wasn't comfortable and retract their hand by courtesy. He didn't care, wanting to leech the warmth off her rather than contact for bonding. However he knew his handling needed to be gentle despite so badly wanting to snap her arm backwards for the thrill of it. Keeping his grip on her a soft looseness. Taking the chance however to hug her against his side within his coat. Falsely protecting her from the pouring down rain drenching them both.

Chaperoning her down the few blocks to the diner. Holding hands the entire way until they entered the diner filled with a comforting warmth. Beverly pulling away entirely to get away from all contact with him. His frustration picking up on her lack of keeping close contact. Burying his anger under knowing he needed to be patient on luring her close like any prey. Attention turning when they were greeted by staff then taken to a nearby booth.

If it weren't for the place shutting down each night he would consider this to be a greater heat source to stick by. Beverly ordering a coffee for her drink while he ordered nothing. Her relaxation of entering a public place disturbed back into anxiety over his fixated staring.

He didn't pick up the menu, like she did, seeing no reason to bother. Choosing to stare at her from across the small table in promoting her fear to stem further. Still choosing to be polite she didn't outright call him rude. "are you going to order something?" trying to hint that he should stare at something else.

"no ... my diets a little limited." realizing that him not eating wasn't appearing normal. Making up another lie on the spot to cover his odd behavior.

Unfortunately this brought up further questions to her. "limited how? Like allergies or choice?"

"both. My body doesn't handle certain things." almost retching at the thought of anything leafy green. Cooked animals getting the same reaction of revulsion over the ruined meats. "I heard you were in LA for a while." changing the subject.

"I was." suspicious of how he knew so much about her. "where have you been hearing this stuff exactly?"

being honest this time. "all over town." having heard through the literal pipe work of Derry the talks about her. Aside from his own spying right under her nose on conversations. Some of the newer towns folk, unknowing of the rumors, were quite nice to Beverly. The old folks, not so much, still spreading rumors of supposed looseness with men. The news of her return was the talk of the town in such a small place where *nothing* happened.

"what else have you heard?"

"you were going to a fashion school there." she was getting too suspicious now. May have not helped he mentioned hearing about her all over Derry. Nasty rumors about her being a good reason that she hated being talked about. To ease her worries he kept to the basics surrounding her success. "impressively high grades, many

scholarships earned, but you were forced to come here on short notice. Your dad's been really sick as of late. Is that why?" pointing toward the topic of her father that would surely cause her to retract from further talking.

the mention of her dad on top of why she returned having her shy away. "no, its other reasons. I don't want to talk about it." her turn to try moving the conversation away. "where have you been all this time?"

"far off lands." farther than she could imagine. "visiting my original home for a while to do work. Yet, this place always felt more natural for me to embrace. Much smaller, less complex, easy to keep secrets that nobody bothers to care about." proudly talking about his private hunting preserve.

"that's Derry, keeping secrets to spreading false rumors." slouching back in her chair. "sorry, I must sound like such a downer." sitting straight again to show a small smile.

"it happens to everyone in this cold weather. I love the warm summer times far more then the rain." reading off her body language of relaxing the longer their talking went on. Bringing out the fresh scent of cinnamon rolls around him to speed the process quicker.

"it really is. Have to avoid the flooded roads everywhere. So much mud that I swear my boots will get a permanent layer of it."

"I don't like the cold. It's a nuisance to keep away and makes Derry a ghost town. Hard to find someone running about during the storms."

"now that you mention it, it can be pretty lonely. I've been so busy I haven't had the time to really notice. All my friends must think I am a workaholic or something that needs to get out more. That's the price of education I guess, can't afford to let my grades slip now. Do you go to the college?"

"yees. I work in the office." answering in the most general way. He kept hearing students mention work in the office. Though he didn't know exactly what that meant aside from those students were very busy. alongside rarely seen unless called down for help by a

professor.

“ahhh, an office boy.” something he didn't know clicking for her. “Should have known when I saw you in the fabrics room. I don't think I could do the office job involving that boring paperwork and running errands all day for teachers. Do you have to go in the rain a lot? I assume no since it's just a bunch of office desk work inside.”

dipping his head side to side. “ so-so.” Thinking how often he spied indoors vs hunting out in the rain.

“must be brutal against your class schedule. What are you taking?”

trying to avoid the question. “ it's not very interesting.”

“aw come on. If any class is uninteresting, it's mine. Spending hours staring at fabrics to sew together for the next day.”

he heard students talking most about one subject. “engineering?” Beverly not noticing his almost questioning answer.

“wow, and you're taking an office job too?” sounding impressed on his choice. “which engineering branch are you studying in?”

fuck, he didn't know that. “uhh-” saved from answering by the waiter coming to take their order. Not wanting anything while Beverly got hot bowl of clam chowder sided with fresh sourdough bread. When the waiter left he was expected to answer.

It bought him enough time to think something up. “I don't want to talk about work.”

“I get it. You probably deal enough with it as is. I am not too fond of fabric conversation either after so long.”

“yes.” he nodded. “want to hold hands?” he brought up. Having craved the warm touch this entire time, but didn't want to scare Beverly too much on his forwardness. She awkwardly agreed, holding out her hand for him to take. The talking dying down once he took hold. Fidgeting under his silent intent stare locked on her. The tension broken somewhat by the arrival of food to focus on. Needing to separate they're hand holding so that she could eat. A hot clam

chowder was perfect to warm her up in the freezing rain and to all the more spread the heat over to him while touching.

When the meal was finished, he looked at the bill. Having a hard time deciphering what the proper amount of bills were. It was never an issue for him up until now to figure out human money. He knew one particular bill that seemed to usually cover any meal. Setting a \$100 bill on the order paper without a further thought over it.

“shit, grey.” Beverly commented on the massive tip he left on a \$15 meal.

“what? Is it not enough?” unsure of if it was. Her surprised reaction telling him that something he did was highly noticeable.

“uh, no its fine.” chuckling at his lack of money concern to be giving that much away.

“would you like me to walk you home?” holding out his hand for her to take as they left.

Her nervously taking his offered hand. “sure.”

“having a wonderful time?” enjoying the large amount of warmth transferred over. Keeping up her relaxation around him as long as possible to promote this dating forward.

“yeah. Really nice to get out of the house for a while.”

“where are you living exactly? I know your father continues to live in those apartments and that's not where I dropped you off.” his aim was to be taken to her home eventually. Staying inside someplace filled with warmth without need to hide away the entire time in a darkened corner.

“one of the boring houses on the block.” generalizing her location in that area.

“maybe I should come visit?”

“uh, no. very busy with a mess of school work all over the place.” chuckling on the excuses she made to keep him from coming over.

“which I really need to get to work on for tomorrow's classes.”

“mm, well since we cant hang out any longer today how about another date tomorrow?”

“alright, we'll meet for some coffee.” smiling up as they walked together holding hands.

2. Having purpose



The pour down of dreary rain coming hard before the two could meet at the coffee shop doors. Beverly already soaked in the short time she ran from her classes up to “grey”. Holding the door open for her to happily enter the small coffee shop first. The place being more of a small breakfast deli market than one of those fancy coffee places. A perfect place to sit for a small lunch break between work. The coffee aspect highly popular for sleep stressed students from the nearby campus.

“sure you don't want anything hot to eat?” offering again as she only asked for coffee. Anything to get her warmer benefited him in the long run costing him a mere split second energy to make those fake bills.

“no, I am fine. What about you though? Can't eat anything here?”

“uh, no. far tooooooo unprepared for my digestion.” looking over all the overcooked, in his opinion, meats stuffed into sandwiches. alongside disgusting green leaves and red sliced tomatoes that dripped into ruining them further.

“not even coffee?” receiving a head shake from him. “what is your diet?” being careful of how she asked him for some reason he wasn't quite sure why.

“vvvvery high protein. Very, very, processed by doctors.” making

things up off what little he's gathered involving humans and special allergies.

“ah, do you have to follow a schedule for your diet?”

thinking in a way he had a feeding schedule between his rests. “sort of, but very loosely.” having no need of relying on an exact waking day. “as long as its before I sleep.” handing Beverly her hot coffee when it came to the counter. Hiding a flinch caused by the strong smell of the drink. Moving away to lead her to where they could sit down away from the strong brewed coffee smell. settling by the storefront window the rain tapped against to flow down in streams.

“hand?” holding out his own on the table. Her expression twitching a moment of curiosity toward his hand. Taking hold of it without a word to him about it, but it certainly seemed like she wanted to ask.

He was about to ask her what it was she was curious about when a voice called her name. Disrupting their calm date in the cozy place.

“Beverly!” Pennywise saw the male Beverly once dated.

“David?” shocked to see her ex charging up to their table. Pennywise unconcerned by the events unfolding up until Beverly took her hand away from him. Turning aggravated that maybe she was going to reconcile with her ex. He stood up to block the males path baring cold dagger eyes down to him. Startling the small male back from his intimidating presence hovering by.

David doing his best to hide his fear he puffed up his chest. Throwing dagger eyes of his own to the massive male. “whose this?” he questioned Beverly. Pennywise about laughed at the silly display of the male hiding his fear.

Beverly replied in holding back her agitation. “his name is grey. Why are you so angry?”

“I came to talk over what happened, but looks like you've already moved on!” moving his anger fully onto her.

Her voice rising in anger. “you dumped me out into the rain in the middle of the night! If it weren't for grey walking me home

something could have happened to me!”

“that's because you were always a bitch to me! When ever we went on dates it was hardly a date at all. You **never** talked to me or said anything about yourself! Now you're suddenly dating this jackass! You didn't want to date me, admit it!”

“I did, but it wasn't the right time! I was dealing with a lot and couldn't-”

“save the excuses! Everyone's told me what you do!”

the anger building off her dying after that single sentence. Tense shoulders going slack as worry took the angers place at the mention of the dreaded rumors. Especially in front of “grey” who she hoped didn't know about the issues she supposedly had.

“your a fucking whore and like everyone said you've already got the next guy to suck off!” the male ripped into her mentally. Catching the whole attention of the small eatery that Pennywise felt this had gone on long enough. Blocking the males small view of Beverly to step into Davids personal space. Pressing the male to step backwards to get away from the aggressive approach.

“... you better watch her!” warning grey. “she'll dump you for somebody else!” leaving out the way he came in.

Pennywise looked back to Beverly who kept her gaze locked on the floor. Reading her various emotions of embarrassment, worry, and hurt that this situation happened out in a public store. Struck silent waiting for something else to happen next between her and him.

Thinking what it was. “waiting for me to question her?” standing by quietly a little longer to then answer her silent worrying for his reaction. “I do not care.” referring to the rumors. Her gaze looking up to him. “I know they are rumors and nothing else.” speaking the truth. He knew the secrets over all of Derry, but didn't care for most of the gossip unless it worked to his advantage. Here in this situation it was no use to him. “hand?” his offering hand raising a relieved chuckle from her. His reaction being unexpected to her that relief flooded over her.

Beverly fighting back tears as she went to hug him. Confusing him as to why she was showing so much physical contact now, however he liked it. Hugging her back to gather as much warmth as he could. Enjoying the contact further when she rubbed his back. Growing annoyed by the crowd rudely staring still during all of this. Glaring at anyone still staring to force them into looking away.

“would you like to go someplace else?” preferring to be alone with her or at least somewhere without people gawking over their interactions.

She pulled away with a small snuffle to nod her head. “yeah.” taking a hold of his hand and grabbing her barely touched coffee with the other. Leading him outside to where her steps slowed down on where they were going. Heading off randomly to just get away from the place of negativity. Letting her lead the way to wherever without a care to where they could end up. Slowing their pace further once out of sight from the store. Walking along a dirt path between the road and flowing river heading toward the town center. The wide tree branches over head giving them protection from the light rain.

“I am sorry about what happened.” she apologized. “that night you bumped into me I had broken up with David a few minutes earlier. We really hadn't dated that long and it wasn't working out between school-”

“you don't need to explain.” he interrupted. Mainly because he didn't care to hear about it. Having her be all the more happy to stay close to him in his coat. Relaxing far more then she did ever before around him. Sprouting a curiosity in him as to why the change in her behavior. Was it because he didn't act as human as the other males? Didn't care for the rumors that labeled her as promiscuous? Didn't care to deeply know things about her? Nor pressed to know the things she hid away when asked about them?

“the rains finally clearing up. Weatherman said it would be going all day.” she looked up to the sky clearing enough for the sunset to peek through.

“will give us time to dry before heading home. Like for me to escort you back?” still trying to be invited to her home.

Her body tensing up still at the question even after doing it two nights in a row. “uh -” was what she got out when something smacked into the back of her head. A rock clacking to the floor at their feet. Passing soon after was a truck full of other males laughing at them shouting to slurs of Beverly's bad reputation. The rumors have seemed to have spread further to the newer residents of Derry.

It took Pennywise a simple split second to register everything. locked onto their faces to take in who they were. Two young men he recognized as living in one of the more broken down RV parks. The details of the rusted red truck they drove away in. down to the broken license plate light missing a piece of glass the size of a dime. a growl cut short in his throat to stay disguised beside Beverly. Looking to her next as she took in all of what happened slower than he did. Seeing the physical and mental pain she reacted to in the moment.

“you alright?” watching her rub the hurt spot.

“yeah.” looking down at her hand for possible blood.

Her answer blurry in his mind that fixated more on finding the harassers. “I am walking you home.” stating without any room for her to argue, yet he could see despite her worry she wasn't wanting to deny the offer. Pennywise took her hand again to start walking her home on the darkening streets. Aware that she lived in a tent that would offer no protection from vandals he made a second offer. “would you like me to stay and guard?”

Beverly fidgeted with the bottom edge of her shirt. “no, it's fine. I'll be awake doing school work for a while anyway.” answering him too quickly in a false cheerful tone to hide her nervousness. He could see she wanted to say yes, but denied.

Thinking the question. “why for? it didn't help her to be alone in the woods as an easy prey.” he didn't argue despite thinking that he knew better for her. Letting her walk alone the rest of the way from a corner they separated at each time. Out of her sight he was off in a flash toward the house of those males in the truck.

Growling through a mouthful of drool at the sight of their place. Unwilling to wait for them to come back out he grabbed a nearby

cinder block. Tossing it ,as light as a pebble, right through the windshield. Hitting the inside of the truck so hard it bent the leather chairs to end up embedded into the metal behind them. They weren't about to get away with what they did.

“lets see them laugh now.” he snarled in waiting for them. It didn't take long after such a racket was made.

“what the hell?!” one shouted as the other cursed. Looking around for who did it they spotted a strange clown standing nearby. Getting aggressive before they even asked if he did it or not. “did you do this fucker?!” The same man roared. His aggressive charging getting a laugh from the clown seeing a man act intimidating. He would soon learn who he messed with was no human.

Pennywise bared his teeth in full show of the many sharp rows. Scaring the man into stopping in his tracks. A deep guttural growl escaped his throat in a lunge toward the terrified man. Teeth shredding into his throat to rip out the tender part. Swallowing down the meat bearing some small flavor after so many cardboard tasting prey. Surely the next victim would taste even better as seeing such a horrifying sight. The other man yelled for help as he ran toward the neighboring RVs. Getting one step off his lawn when a massive force tackled him to the dirt. Gasping out a breath of air by a fist smashing threw his rib cage. Shortly dying by his heart ripped out in a dripping mess.

The clown chugged down the mouthfuls of dripping blood by holding the organ above. Remaining out on the darkened lawn to enjoy his seasoned meal without a care. Taking bites of the heart like a juicy apple to then throw the last bite into his mouth. For the rest of the night he ate his meal while the other a temporary table to dine over. Thinking over how this hunt was a lot more forward then his usual tactics. He didn't like doing hunts that caused a lot of attention because then he spent more energy covering them up then they're worth.

Pausing his eating temporarily at why he did this. The harassment of the men wasn't even toward him. So why did he get so angry when he didn't care for Beverly?

“she's mine up to the end of April. I take care of **my** things and won't let anyone else damage them.” reasoning with himself. Of course it made sense to him by that angle. “if she dies early I won't get the hunt I've waited patiently for.” ripping a chunk of flesh from a half eaten arm.

Cleaning off his plate, sort of speak, he headed back to the cold den. Listening in on the only entertainment down there of the town gossip. Many voices sounding through the air like a large group phone call. People chatting around their dinner tables so close to their kitchen sinks. drunk partiers in the clubs talking in the bathroom while friends puked their guts out. Any pipe work within speaking distance made a perfect speaker phone down to his lair. It was official to everyone who the talk of the town was tonight.

Beverly the whore had returned to Derry. Word had spread fast these past few days of who she was. That women had better lock up their men to keep her from stealing them away. As if she were a mythical siren aiming to ruin the lives of homes everywhere. That any girls who were friends of hers were also vicious harpy's ready to pluck off men. He could tell by word of the pipe that Beverly was going to start having a much harder time from now on. Shutting out the looping chat of rumors he grew tired of listening in on. Waiting then on for the break of day to follow Beverly around. Prepare for the war ahead that she had no idea was coming.

The next day he saw her prepare for school to arrive on campus surrounded by people staring. Whispering among the groups making her uncomfortable from all the sudden attention. Spotting her friends she ran right over them for some familiar comfort. Being rejected from her clique that was so close just yesterday. Pennywise watching from afar being unable to hear, but could still clearly see their body language. Beverly left standing there under their glaring eyes pointing for her to leave like a punished dog. Forced to go off alone into the middle of the vast crowds snickering about her. The rest of her day fairing no better as she worked alone in the corners of the class. Away from her usual group hang out to chat during work.

One particular group of males making rude gestures that Beverly had gotten used to it. These sort of reactions toward her unfortunately being the norm since her childhood. Pennywise certainly wasn't going

to tolerate this behavior toward something of his. Those men having unfortunate luck for the rest of the day. One crushed under part of a sign falling onto them. Another hit by a car while crossing the parking lot. Another accidentally swallowing a glass shard hidden in his chili. Accidents beginning to befall anyone else who dared insult her.

Buckets of paint falling onto a girl, afterwards needing an ambulance. Another group having a whole tree fall upon them. A runner's leg snapping after a nasty fall down the stairs. It was the most fun Pennywise had in a while causing so much pain. Satisfied with himself by the time for his and Beverly's next date to start. Rain pouring down while making his way over to her ending class.

"hello, Beverly." he greeted. Smile dropping by her negative reaction toward him. Acting not at all happy to see him. No cheerful greeting as she almost avoided all eye contact with him. "what's wrong?"

Acting skittish around him she tried to hide behind an excuse. "nothing, just tired."

passing on asking her further questions. "... ready for our date?"

"I am sorry grey, but I can't. I have a lot of school work to do ... I think it's best we stop seeing each other." her rejection catching him off guard. He didn't have the chance to say a thing when she rushed off. "bye grey." speaking as she ran.

A growl escaping his throat that all his work to build a sense of security for her was crushed. His source of warm affection stolen from him that he needed to get back. Spying on her further to figure out why this change in her occurred. Was she dating that idiot he scared off in that food store? Or worse she discovered who grey truly was? Looking back he did overdue the "accidents" around the campus. Following her he could hear more closely the people harassing her. They made up a new label for her to be insulted under.

"The witch." they shouted in warning at the sight of Beverly. Jokingly running away when she walked passed. The jokes pecking away at the end of his patience. Thinking about upping the accidents to disappearances during the more flooded days. Storms caused the

worst road conditions that nobody would bat an eye over a drowned body. His anger rivaling the storm raging on the further into the day. Having his daily warmth completely gone forcing him to suffer the cold. He followed her all the way back to her little campsite. Debating on if he should sneak in to leech off any warmth that he could.

Beverly holding up inside her tent that ruffled by the blasting wind. Catching glimpses of her sowing inside while soaking wet past the entrance swirling around. Her shivering tipping him off that without their date and the rain pouring down so heavily she had no way of gaining warmth. A fire being impossible to strike up in such weather. A way to cook a warm meal being impossible without a fire. To even gain some warmth himself he would need to bring her something warm to eat. Heading off to the diner to snatch up a meal that seemed the hottest. A bowl of fresh chicken soup he heard children speak of often curing colds. Swirling with chicken pieces, long noodles, carrots and peas in a hot sunny yellow broth. The order getting a free side of bread slices he didn't know what was really for.

Returning to set down the soup in front of her tent in secrecy. Throwing small pebbles at the front of her tent to get her attention. Planning on her to eat the food to capture warmth in the tent and then he would sneak in as possibly a small mouse to hide among the covers. Smiling to himself that he should have thought of this sooner, but had instead been too patient on these dates leading to a sleepover invite. Watching from a group of bushes when she looked out to her eyes landing on the bag of hot food.

Her reaction wasn't what he expected at all. She grabbed the bag and flung it far into the wet woods appearing furious by the gift. Confused he stared in questioning why she rejected it. "does she not like the soup? Is my gift not good enough for her?" turning offended that his gift was rejected. Heading off back to the same dinner for a different soup. Another chicken and something he hadn't heard of. A thicker creamy soup swirling with floating biscuits of sorts between peas, carrots and weird green bits. This time getting a choice of two sides having him pick the hottest ones. A side container of mac and cheese and another of chili next to more random bread pieces.

Coming back he spotted Beverly walking out in the rain the same

way. Coming up to her to question what she was doing. “why are you out in the rain?” startling her as she did not see him at first.

“um-” was what she got out before seeing the bags he was carrying. Recognizing them as the same ones she tossed away. “where'd you get those?” pointing to the steaming hot bags.

“the diner, they're for you. Why'd you throw the other food?” offended still at his gift being rejected.

“for me? **You** dropped off that food?! How'd you find me?! Did you follow me back to my tent?!” snapping at him over the fact.

“yes, why-”

“how long have you known?!” her anger confusing him further. Why did it matter that he knew about her little campsite?

admitting without concern to fueling her anger. “a while. Why did you throw out the food?”

“you stalked me back to my tent?! don't you know how creepy that is?! Ugh!” glaring off to the side in thought of what to do.

“why shouldn't I know about your tent?” asking openly about it. “did you not like the soup?” he turned the subject.

“you followed me is the weird thing! I-ugh!” sighing in defeat. “I guess it doesn't matter if you've known for a while now. And its not that I didn't like it. I thought it was some assholes leaving food that could have piss mixed in or something.” her anger dying down in the cold rain. “come on, we can get out of the rain.” waving for him to follow her back. Slipping into her tent to turn on a hanging flashlight for some light.

“it's more soup.” he informed while handing it over.

“thanks grey. You want anything? If you can have it at all.”

thinking how he needed to appear more human. “I can have a bit of the mac and cheese and chili.” as she took everything out of the bag. The foods without any disgusting greenery while being a recognized

food from the fairs. The chili usually being far spicier as more of a challenge food. The mac and cheese he awkwardly stared at in its more free form not involved in a fried square on a stick.

Apologizing as she grabbed a small cooking pot. "sorry about this, I don't really have plates." pouring some of the two sides into it. Grabbing a wrapped spork from the bag to hand alongside it. He didn't mind it as he slowly started eating with barely a chew. The food evaporating away by the time it reached his throat.

She picked at her food first before sighing. Admitting to him that. "I am not happy you followed me here." causing him to stop his eating to listen. "but it's nice not needing to keep this a secret anymore."

"I still don't see why a tent needs to be kept a secret." brushing the whole thing off. Bringing a small smile to her face as she ate.

"sorry about what I said earlier. I wasn't all that up for going out after a long day at school. It's really nice we still got to hang out today."

"can we still date?"

"heh, sure." nodding through a bite of mac and cheese. "whens your birthday?" attempting to know more about him.

"birthday?"

"yes, you're day of birth." joking at first then turning serious at his confused reaction. "do you know your birthday?"

"I do!" huffing at the stupid question. He knew the time in general, maybe not the day. Earth's time was far too short to count back to the time. Between Maturin and his creation it felt like some days passed in between for the two immortal beings. For humans it was more like eons between then and eons more before the earth became what it is. The exact day it would be, of his creation, within earth's calendar year lost to him.

"what day is it?" she asked in a gentler voice. He didn't answer at first to think one up.

“Halloween.” It was his most favorite time and if he had to pick one it would be that day. Despite all those children running around, the scent of candy everywhere covered them. Keeping back his hunger far more than all the other days. The fall fairs offering all those sweet treats of caramel apples to mini apple pies baked to look like pumpkins. His clown presence being the most tolerated to walk around in the open.

“really?” she sounded so skeptical of the date he choose.

He grumbled while not wanting to really argue over this stupid little topic. “yes.” The fact some life was created was not something really worth celebrating. It happened everyday being a natural part of the universe. Same as him and Maturin the turtle created by the higher *other* to help balance life and decay. But why then would the other send children to face him? In the beginning he thought it was all the turtle working to stop him. In his sleep he saw the connection better between all those children, the turtle, and *the other* guiding them.

Why kill something he created that was doing what came naturally to it? Was his purpose void? No longer needed in the vast universe? True he spent most of his time on earth, but he didn't slack like the turtle did. He still burned away the building decay across the universe during his “hibernation”. Returning to earth to fill a different hunger using his favorite hunting grounds.

“are you okay?” Beverly's voice catching his attention. people were usually happy to mention their birthday, but not him. He sat there, staring off into space appearing empty inside through his eyes. “do you hate your birthday?” carefully treading on what to ask.

“no, the day does not spark an interest in me, is all. It's just a time, nothing more.”

“ever had a birthday party?”

“no.”

“want to have one? It's not your birthday yet, but we can throw you a party early. Get a cake, decorate, blow up some balloons.”

“heh, I am not much of a party goer. The cake alone will do.” liking the thought of a sweet cake to devour.

“how old will you be this year?” another question needing him to think something up. What would a proper age for him be?

“heh, uh, you don't want to know how old I am.” playing it off as a joke.

“sure I do.” laughing along with a smile. “What, are you like actually 40 or something?” he could at least tell in her voice that, that wasn't a proper age to pick.

“no!” sounding as honest as he could.

“ like 30-ish?” her voice again making it sound like a bad pick.

“noooo.” playing along till hopefully she would unintentionally suggest a “proper” age for him.

“25?”

going off her reaction to that number he nodded. “yes.” confirming it to her.

“two years older then me. I turned 23 in march ... are you superstitious?”

“no, why?”

“my birthdays also on Friday the 13th. When some people find out they can react really badly.”

“how stupid of them.” knowing exactly how those fears were. He could break a mirror in their presence and they would crumble. Such a pathetic sight to see of any creature collapse into a sobbing mess over a reflective object breaking.

“I wished more people were like you.”

“like me? Why?” what insane creature would want more of him around?

“you don't judge as much as everyone else in this town.”

“ha, is that the only reason why?” an absurd reason off how much he judged humans as simple prey. Hobbling around to worry over stupid matters while their miserable lives meant nothing of worth.

“your not very grabby either.” her voice quieter on that point. Going back up for the next one. “ you're patient, confident, always willing to speak your mind.”

pleased by all the ego stroking she was giving. “well of course I am. Guess its old fashioned quality's I've gained over the years.”

“you're not that old fashioned.” shifting to sit next to him. “at least you haven't demanded me to be a quiet girlfriend. Walk behind you everywhere until introduced.”

“sounds like you've had that experience before.”

“yeah, had a few bad dates. Don't want to burden you about them. Old news that should be moved away from.” drinking down the last of her soup. Leaning comfortably against him as she swapped between eating her remaining sides.

“why are you even out here? It's not safe being alone in the woods.” asking curiously. Personally knowing why it wasn't safe. Feeling her fidget against him before answering.

“me and my dad have problems and it's better to be here. I want to leave it at that.” voice wavering through anxiety.

“would you like me to stay?” he offered again in the hopes of her saying yes to him staying in the warm tent.

“no, I'll be fine. Camping out here isn't really that bad.” hiding her true reaction of wanting him to stay the same as the last time.

Pennywise held in a growl. “if you're sure.” Thinking back to his original plan of sneaking in anyway.

“I won't even be here tonight anyway.”

“what, why?!” shocked to hear.

“I signed up for a private study hall time. My classes mid final is coming up and I need a place for my sewing machine. Our dresses will be due tomorrow night so I have to crunch all night and day. Once we turn our dresses in they go on an actual model to pose for a mini run way. You can win scholarships from businesses attending if they like your work enough.” not noticing how shocked he really was. “you must be super busy on your mid finals too.”

“yyyes, very. Lots of paperwork to sign and books to read.” his disappointment in her missing for the night passing for school work exhaustion.

“only a few more months at least. Then we got summer break until next semester.”

“mm, yes.” simply agreeing to what she was saying. Thinking differently of how she won't last that long by his plans.

“I actually should be going now. I was heading to the hall when I ran into you. For our date tomorrow we can go out for lunch. Between studying it would be good to have a break for the both of us. You may have to come pull me from my desk I'll be so deep in my work.” joking in stretching away from him.

“lunch it is then.” agreeing on the time. At least he was getting to spend time with her earlier than usual. Getting up to follow her out into the lighter rain. Surprised by her giving a hug goodbye.

“see you tomorrow.” separating on a small wave goodbye. Watching her head down the road before going his own way back down to his lair.

Questioning what he could have done to gain so much affection from her. “such an oddity she is. Maybe part of her fearlessness toward me has passed onto this form despite her unaware of my false face. Oh well, as long as she never discovers me I shouldn't really care. The closer I get to her the better my final hunt will be. She won't be prepared for it when I finally stab her in the back.” sitting down on a chair jutting from the side of his pile. Lounging in it like a throne

made specifically for him.

Listening through the rumor pipework to pass the time. News around the town being nothing new. A new shop opening, movies playing, aside from the bland discussions of who's dating who through out the pipework of girls bathrooms. Catching discussions of Beverly that he wasn't interested until the mention of him came up.

Hearing a couple girls speak to one another. "you know that tall guy she's with?"

"yeah, I've heard a bunch of stuff after that argument in the deli place."

"did you know the dudes fucking rich? He left a mega tip at the diner."

"oh yeah, that thing spread faster then the argument stuff. no surprise that slut snatched him up and dropped David like a hot potato."

"you think she'll keep him for the money?"

"at least till they marry. Then it'll be divorce for all his money plus extra."

"feel sorry for the bastard."

"pfft, that dope is saving us from losing the rest of our men to that witch."

Pennywise snarled over the insults. "feeling sorry for me?!" someone certainly was going to befall the nasty bad luck that had hit others. The rumor pipes closed for now to set the negative luck in motion. Happily spreading the curse over the course of the night needing many to crowd the hospital waiting room.

The next day he arrived up to the large hall building filled with small cubical rooms. Separated by thin wood walls to provide some privacy. Walking directly to the small box room Beverly had spent the first half of the day in. like she said yesterday, he had to come pull her out from crunching her dress work. Stepping right inside

without a knock to announce his presence.

Beverly jumping to him entering to guiltily look up at the wall clock. "shit, time really got away with me. Sorry grey." apologizing.

"nothing to worry over. You said you'd be busy. Ready to go?" cutting to the part he wanted.

"yep, and here. I got you this early morning." handing him a small brown box with a clear window at the top.

"whats this?" taking up the box.

"I said id get you a cake. Itsss actually not a full cake, but a cup cake. I asked for one that's anti allergy on everything. No nuts, gluten, cinnamon, and other things. I hope you can eat it." mildly worried over his expression while staring down at the mini cake.

He can eat it despite all the list of missing things she talked about. There had never been a cake he couldn't eat. Why did she give him this? No ones given him a gift before. Examining the cake as if some part of it held the answer. A golden fluffy cake topped with a light yellow perfect swirl of icing decked in red small round sprinkles. Topped off by a large red cherry sprouting a long red stem curving over. Mouth watering at the sweet dessert given to him so freely without use of fake money.

"grey?" softly speaking his name.

Catching that he was zoning out again. "its fine, I can eat it." calming her worries. "shall we go?"

"mhmm." humming as they headed out of the study hall. "we eating at the diner?" asking as they passed the hall doors.

"no, I thought we should eat some place warmer during this weather." waving in gesture to the rain falling over them.

"that will be nice. Where to then?"

"that white place up in the heights."

“we're going **there?!**” amazed by the destination he choose. “That place is really expensive grey. Are you sure about going there? I don't mind the diner.”

radiating confidence in the matter. “I am sure, why wouldn't I be?” popping open his gifted cake box.

“its that ... the heights don't like me. Aside from being a poor peasant in their eyes the rumors about me hasn't helped their view. What if they don't even let me in?”

“they'll let you in.” taking up the cake in hand. Waiting for the moment Beverly looked away to devour the small cake. It only took a second in the time she did, that his jaws stretched unnaturally wide. Throwing the whole cake into his mouth of rowed teeth. Mashing it down to completely swallow in seconds. Including the paper cup it was sitting in that was meant to be removed. Finding the flavor of the allergy free cake to be vastly different from the fair ones. A lot less sweet with a more grainy texture for the cake. The icing being incredibly light in consistency like whipped cream.

Beverly seeing the cake missing from his hand. “did you eat the cupcake already?”

“yes, I am really hungry.” lying to her.

“no kidding.” happy to see that he ate it.

Reaching the fancy diner it only took one cold glare to shut down anyone negatively eyeing them. Both their stomachs filled despite Pennywise's meal aversions. Able to select a meal of steak tartare that his dead lights wouldn't spew back out in rejection. Beverly slowly working through her meal of lamb drizzled in chocolate mint sauce.

Beverly stopping to ask him something. “grey.” taking his attention away from mixing his raw egg in the ground up hamburger. “tonight for my mid final I am suppose to attend the runway judging at the Paul Bunyan statue. I am allowed to bring a guest and thought of asking you. If you're not busy studying.”

“I can come.”giving no real thought to what she was asking.

Smiling to him as he ate a bite of raw meat. “thanks grey.”

swallowing his barely chewed bite to speak. “what for?” her behavior throwing him off further. Why so happy that he agreed to follow her someplace? Still confused by the gifted cake earlier. He wasn't doing anything special to cause such cheer in her. He fed her and leached warmth off her, yet she was willingly giving him affection. Surely it wasn't that easy, maybe she did know it was him and simply messing with him.

Tossing the idea aside when thinking it over. “I give her too much credit. She's simply being nice as a part of polite human trading. I give her something and she gives me something back. If I trade something big she'll have to offer something equal. Maybe then I can spend the night if I pick a shiny thing humans obsess over.”

keeping her voice quiet so that other tables couldn't hear. “for a lot of things. The really nice dinner dates, bringing me food, not dumping me the moment you heard rumors. Not judging where I live.” barely above a whisper on the last point.

waving it off. “oh that. No thanks are necessary.” still not seeing the big deal of his actions.

“i say they are. You know a lot about me and that's kinda rare for someone to stick around long enough for that. I don't know much about you. How's your family life? Your parents must be super proud of you attending college for an engineering degree.”

the question took him off guard that had him roughly swallowing his food to think. He didn't exactly have parents unless *the other* his creator counted despite the lack of necessary parenting. Maturin always called him his brother against his wishes not too. He didn't want any connections with some lazy slob who was practically in a coma most the time. Bothering him during the most inconvenient of times such as with the loser children.

the other having his own duties to attend to he rarely bothered with anything. Even his own creations were sent off on their own soon after their forms were solid enough. Pointed to their duties and other then that had free will toward anything else. Leaving him to question

why *the other* stretched out his influence to disturb his free will on earth. Was *the other* proud of his creations? Pennywise wasn't sure of the answer to that. Lots of time was spent creating things to serve a purpose not necessarily to grow into some golden example to smaller creatures. He must be displeased for some reason if he spared random children after so many years of him devouring humans.

Perhaps it was merely because the turtle finally stayed awake long enough to go crying about his creations being destroyed. Why bother over something that was even an accident? If earth was created with a purpose, like him, then he could see why it was worth getting involved over. *the other* stopped him from doing his purpose of destruction.

Catching himself zoning off. "I have ... a parent." he slowly answered. Nervousness over mentioning *the other* in any way could mean him coming to interfere a second time. "I don't know what they want."

"oh." she looked at him with pity. Grating on his nerves that he didn't need it from her. A weak little life he could snuff out without a care from anyone.

"I've been on my own. I don't need coddling like a child." keeping back a growl.

"Something we both unfortunately have in common." Beverly sighed as she swirl some meat in mint sauce longer than most pieces.

He laughed at the thought of something "in common" between them. His existence was nothing like hers. Able to serve a purpose in the multiple universes. Or was he? Was he even sure anymore? "mm." he hummed in answer. The two finishing their lunch to head back to studying for mid finals.

Pennywise roaming the dark grey covered town for a real meal. Suffering a lack of luck that had him delving into his thoughts as he stalked the empty streets. "I have a purpose. Why wouldn't I? He created others of my kind to serve the same purpose." the flaw of his kind looming at the back of his head. They couldn't create things unlike the turtle. They were not granted that gift that left his kind to

die. There were fewer and fewer of them each time he looked. Was their purpose temporary? He being meant as the last to fall and thus why he lead those children to break him down?

“but they failed.” without any possible reason to if *the other* really meant to make sure of his demise. “was it because I stepped past my limited purpose?” when his kind were made they couldn't reproduce, but he found a way. Creating eggs holding the spark of life while others he knew couldn't do. A weak work around that never lasted long for one reason or another. The time those children came for him he had made them last longer than usual. Getting better each time he tried creating young through the centuries. If it is to never happen how will his species survive? *the other* was not creating more as their numbers dwindled to almost extinct. If their purpose was no longer needed, what was he to do?

The questions crowing his mind to the point where he couldn't focus on the hunt anymore. Heading back to his pile to slump inside the wagon crowded by shelf's of trinkets. Alone in the darkened space to sort his thoughts before the night with Beverly. Glancing at a small old rusted pocket watch on a shelf nearby for the time. Grumbling that his mind was still racing through questions when it was time to go.

Slipping himself out from a water drain out into the light rain of the night sky. All the stars usually seen hidden completely by the black clouds. Grumbling at the cold the entire way to the statue. He wasn't a fan of the large lumberjack standing in place of where he first arrived. It should be a statue in his honor to show worship to him as a greater being. Then again he didn't have great memories of the spot. Trapped in the earth waiting for humans to evolve enough for a greater grasp on survive-ability. First tempted here by the sweet smell of fear by the creatures stomping across the earth at the time. It took all his energy to get here only to immediately require a long hibernation to regain it all back. Leaching fear off all the creatures dieing to the cloud of darkness he forced up upon landing. None of it was enough to satisfy his hunger. By the time humans were settling his hunger was maddening. He should have waited longer, but couldn't take it anymore.

He shoved down the agitation of the spot as he arrived to find

Beverly. Passing by the various gates meant to block out others. Heading into the large tent meant to protect the large party from the weather. Having trouble finding Beverly past the various scents of strong calone every apparently bathed in before coming. His nose was practically burning off all the irritants. Happy to have found Beverly hanging out by the entrance where the smells wouldn't stick around.

"hey." he caught her attention. Surprised to see her surprised by his appearance after she asked him to come.

"how'd you get in here? I was watching the bouncer for you. Did you sneak in?"

"no. I walked in, nobody stopped me." answering truthfully minus certain details on why.

"oh, I guess the college didn't want to spend much on security. The punch must be spiked by the frat boys by now I am sure. Anyway, thanks for coming. Right now it's just before showing as we wait for late attendees. There are some snacks around." she gestured to one area with white clothed tables. "I do believe the spiked punch thing. So be careful of that if you can't hold alcohol well." the whole tent going silent off an announcement over a megaphone made for the class to take seats for the fashion show. "time for the show. Follow me, they assigned us seats. This part might be boring for you, but were in the back so after my dress showing we can just sneak out to the party room. I heard a lot of people do it after seeing their judge card."

"its fine, will it be warm inside?" the only thing he really cared about.

"yep, between the thousands of lights and tightly packed people." leading him out to another tent that was filled by a long stage surrounded by seats. Sitting next to Beverly as the rest of the seats were filled. Sitting through boring announcements as models walked around in various dresses. Entertaining himself by judging the poor threading. Some dresses almost on the brink of falling apart they were so rushed.

Only realizing which one was Beverly's by her bringing his attention to it. A long flowing dress with ranging colors of summer. Some green, a little orange and the main overall color a bright white.

"the yellow fabric was a pain to work with. It's as if every dust particle is attracted to it." Beverly whispered next to him. Of course a summer dress wouldn't be white, it's only what his eyes saw. Yellow was a color he couldn't see at all. The rest of the rainbow being dull excluding red. The aggressive color almost acting as a vibrant beacon to anything with it. It's why Beverly was so easy a target between all the losers. Her hair gave her away like a neon bullseye. Yellow could almost act the same as a bright white or silver depending on the shade. The color used to cause him quite the issue after taking over the life of Bob Grey. His fellow workers and fans asking why his recognizable yellow suit was now suddenly silver. He thought of correcting it once, but the circus wasn't meant to stick around long.

"yes, very lovely." falsifying his interest long enough to please her. Happy to hear they could leave the boring stage tent.

"whew! Thank god that's over! with that high score I should have caught the eye of those scholarship givers. I hate that they take a week to say if you got one or not." heading into a third much larger tent filled with some dining tables and a dance area. Grabbing two glasses of light bubbly liquid looking closely like white wine, but not smelling the same.

Handing one of the thin glasses to him. "what? Can't drink it?" asking from his confused look down to it.

"what is it?"

"it's sparkling apple cider. Never had it before?"

"no." he answered before chugging the whole thing down in a single throw back.

Beverly turning concerned by the time he finished. "uh, i-it won't make you sick right?"

keeping an answer simple. "drinks are fine." setting the glass down.

“okay, just making sure.” leading him past the long table of drinks to a dining table. Covered in white cloth brightened by a candle in a tall glass container. Small cards with a few meal selections to choose from. Pennywise skipping most the list straight to the desert section for strawberry shortcake and various large cookies. Receiving an amused look from Beverly by the hoard of deserts he got. The meals small enough to not take too long to eat.

Beverly getting up to speak with her teachers as grey stood by. He could off her expression that the excitement of the night was turning to anxiety. Her fellow classmates whispering about her to tear apart her work ruthlessly. Chipping away at any peace Beverly had after all her hard work. The party turning sour toward her the longer she stood around. Only her professors seeming kind enough to talk with her. Everyone else turning bolder to speak their minds about her.

“would you like to dance?” he offered knowing humans liked to do that at parties. Something to get her away from the crowds snickering.

“oh no, no way. I can't dance.” waving off the offer with a laugh.

“you don't know how to dance?”

“nope, do you?” her question growing a wide smile across his face.

“**of course.**” Pennywise the dancing clown **wasn't** only a title. He had centuries to dance the nights away to show off. All those age old balls held in large courts of wealth to display someone's grandness. He attended every single one to steal the show from everybody else. He wasn't about to pass up the opportunity here. “come dance.” offering his hand to her.

“ha, no.” jokingly refusing.

“oh come now. Its a single dance I promise you wont regret.” keeping his hand out.

“ ... you better not drop me or anything.” hesitantly taking his hand. Lead along happily by him to the dance floor. Judging the other dancers as they waited for a new song to join in on. Thinking them

all clumsy amateurs ready to slip on the wood flooring set up.

“ready?” snickering at her look of dread when stepping onto the dance floor. Shrinking down under the gaze of everyone locking onto them. “don't look at them. Watch me as I lead, easy.” pulling her close against him. Smiling over the blush he got from her by the action. With the song starting she glided into a rhythm of careful smooth steps. Helped greatly by the fact he could swing Beverly around as light as a feather. Any misstep she could make he could direct into a more proper flow.

Dipping her at one point shooting a spike of fear into her that he enjoyed. Tempted to do it again, but kept to the graceful dance. Stepping elegantly to the calm music playing in the tent. The two highlighted by the warm glow of hanging lights above. Gliding into a smooth stop as the music lowered to its end. Receiving lots of clapping from all the professors while the crowd scoffed the dance in jealousy.

“I don't hear the rain anymore. Want to head out for some fresh air?” asking her as they walked off hand in hand.

happily smiling into hugging his side. “sure.” Walking off to a secluded spot by the park pond under a white gazebo. Peering down across the water reflecting the bright glow of the party. Mixing close colors together in rippling waves. “I am really happy you came.”

“course I came.” brushing old leaves off the railing separating them from the pond water below. “You're here and I want to be by you.” leaning on the cleared railing.

“yeah, but you could have waited for tomorrow and skipped the boring dress show.” hugging his arm to lean her head against his shoulder.

“then i'd be bored and without you.”

“you're so sweet.” leaning into him to kiss his face.

Leaning away from her confused. “what are you doing?”

“oh, sorry, I thought you'd like a kiss. Sorry.” apologizing for her

actions.

“kiss?” raising his eyebrow out of curiosity. She wanted to kiss him? But he hadn't traded anything for that.

“yeah, sorry. I didn't mean to make it happen too fast for you.”

“you want to kiss me, really?” something must be wrong with her head. Nobody wanted to kiss him. Nothing liked him, nothing wanted to be around him, they all ran from his presence in fear. Somehow she wanted to get even closer to the monster that could devour her face. Sweeping it all away in his mind. “no, she's getting closer to “grey”.”

“sure. Have you been kissed before?”

“no.” he had, but not out of affection. They were sloppy drunken kisses out of lust in the moment. He did other things with humans in the privacy of many places. He thought them disgusting, yet enjoyed the play time. Plus it meant a free meal after the thrill time ended. None of them suspected, of all the dangers, that being literally devoured after sex would be one. “people don't like getting close.”

“I don't mind getting close. Do you mind if I do?” smiling at him pulling her close before she could fully get out the question.

“no.” leaning down to kiss her on the lips. Enjoying the sweet taste of her that wasn't influenced by any fear. Returning the gentle kisses urging him to make them deeper. Kissing her into leaning back against one of the large posts. Loving the soft petting of her hands going through his hair. Needing to stop the kiss short before he got too carried away. Stopping a certain slithering organ from wildly twisting out of his pants to join in on the fun. Packing down a pleasant purr riding up to escape his throat.

“party's ending, ready for me to walk you home?” gathering himself together.

“sure thing.” kissing him on the cheek to leave the closing party.

3. Smoke & Fire



After dropping her off at the campsite he headed right back to his wagon. Attempting to fully clear his thoughts this time. Laying on the rickety wagon floor to stare up at the similar wood ceiling.

“why did she want to kiss me? There was no trade. I didn't give something enough to deserve one. Did I? No, I fed her, that can't be enough for a kiss. Humans don't kiss over a plate of food. They need a shiny rock or reflective metals in small boxes.” huffing at the air before rolling over onto his chest. “this is too strange. This goes against the basis of nature. She is prey, nothing more and being together at all would be disgusting. A hunter dating their prey, ha! What a revolting joke!”

now that joke had to end. Only 2 weeks remained of rainy April with spring break coming up for Beverly as her mid finals were finished. Now was the perfect time for her to suddenly go missing. To plan perfectly well where it would all go down. Sure, that would leave him with two weeks of cold to tolerate, but this addiction to her affection was developing too strong for his tastes. Rising up from his wagon floor to head out in search of a location. Finding one by the time the morning sun rose over the land. The sun hidden by the gathering clouds just as it peaked past the tree line.

Thunder roaring across the skies after flashes of light highlighted the dark town. Beverly doing her best to get through classes past all the

mockery. Accidents befalling the all the jokesters. When her classes ended he didn't greet her as usual. Letting her walk home alone while carrying bags of school work from the semester here. Sitting alone in her tent a while longer to get the timing right for their final destination.

Arriving in front of her tent to tap on it. Smiling at Beverly happy to see him standing under an open umbrella and a bag of food. "sorry I am late." offering the bag containing a hot packaged meal. "I was planning a special date for us tonight. You'll actually have to eat on the way if we're going to make it."

"oh? Where are we going?" popping open the food container to look over the hot serving of burger and fries.

"you'll see." gesturing her to follow him. "it's a surprise." smiling down at her joining him under the umbrella.

A flash of lightning crossing the sky raising some concerns. "is the umbrella really safe to hold?" eating a few fries from her container.

"I am sure it'll be fine long as we rush. Unless you rather walk the whole way in pouring rain." he joked.

"no thanks. Want a fry?" offering him some of her food.

"no, I am fine." refusing the pointless food. Looking forward to the **real** meal later.

"can I get a hint to where we're going?" taking up more fries.

"it's a bit far and alone."

"how far exactly?"

"it's almost equal to where the quarry is, but on the opposite side to the town."

"past the river? You're taking me to the abandoned lots?"

"yes, I thought it'd be the perfect place for us to hang around without nosy people. Easier to stay dry as well even with a few leaks."

already scenting a wave of fear radiating off her. Drool building in his mouth driven by pained hunger. It was so hard to catch food he may have to preserve some of his prey for later. "here, you may want this." handing her a flashlight. At least giving her something to make her feel safe enough to not turn back. A 15 minute walk later had them passing by the river onto dirt roads. Passing other buildings taken back by nature.

They approached the abandoned factory past the rusted falling fences meant to turn intruders back. Flashlights going across the surrounding bushes growing wild in the courtyard. Grey making sure he was ahead all the way to the front door covered in chains. Glancing back to make sure Beverly wasn't looking his way. He yanked the lock snapping it off by his inhuman strength. Tossing the iron lock off into the thick bushes by the door.

Beverly's fear leaking through in almost full force needing him to constantly swallow now. "grey, are you sure about this." walking up to stand behind him.

"whaaaat, are you scared?" teasing her, if only she knew. This was where she was going to die. He specifically looked for the perfect place to drive her fear forward. Anyone would be scared of wandering through a decrepit building in the dark. It was also the perfect place to hunt. So many places to get lost around while being so far out an alone. He could torture her as much as he wanted before taking a sweet tasty bit of her flesh.

The nice flowing smoothness of blood down his float. The perfect meal he would saver for as long as he could. while her screams filled the room as a beautiful music to dine along. The imagery turning to heavy drooling he had to swallow past the door. Pausing for Beverly to step in to his side.

"ready to go spelunking? Find some ghosts or maaaybe some dead bodies?" teasing her along inside the halls.

"please don't say that." chuckling along to not seem as terrified, but he knew.

The whole place quiet aside from her steps. His being abnormally

quiet with his bulking size stepping onto the rotten floor tiles. Beverly looking up toward the ceiling covered in hanging moss high above.

“surprised they still have floors. What was this factory for?”

“your favorite, sowing.”

“clothes factory or fabrics in general?”

“started as basic fabrics for trade.” remembering back on when the factory was in production. “Fancy silks to high cost fur coats. When fur went out of style they turned to things like bedding.”

“you know a lot on this place. Read up on it before you brought me?”

“you could say that.” smiling over his shoulder. “I wanted us to have the perfect place – to explore.”

“and nothing else riiiiight?”

“of course not! Nothing drastic at least.” whispering the second part of his sentence.

“better not. I don't want to be rushed to the hospital for a tetanus shot.” teasing him back. Cautiously stepping on some stairs he walked up. Following right behind him after seeing him not fall through the rotten steps. “I think going up is a bad idea. Look at how the floors are.” shining her light across the broken aged wood.

“it's fine. If I can walk across it, it should hold you fine.”

“yes, but that means you'll fall through first and i'd rather neither of us do.”

“just one floor. I bet all the old machinery is up here too. Those massive machines would have fallen through by now if the wood was that rotten.” tempting her to follow deeper in the darkened building.

“i guess. We should take it slow though and stop at any creaking.” following him up.

“of course.” smiling at her following. Wasn't long now by how deep they were getting. Passing through doors to walk down halls leading to other doors off into more halls.

“I think we should head back.” Beverly catching on that their path had been winding on a bit too long for comfort.

“don't worry, I know the way back.” and he did, but she won't be following him out. “look, here's the big machinery I told you about.” showing her into a large room. Filled with massive engines next to the machines they powered for the factory work.

“wow, what exactly did they use these for?” shining her light across all the belts feeding along the room.

“they're giant looms. They spun things from shirts to those hideously designed floor rugs.” giving a tad bit of old history of the machines. “lots of horrible accidents happened here. Severed fingers, crushed hands, lost eyes, a few of the **small** injuries caused by these when they ran.” oh, the old days of horrible factory conditions he once enjoyed as regular entertainment. Another way of a swift meal if nobody cared to check on younger workers.

“not surprised.” Beverly cautiously stepping between the machines as grey did. “what are we looking for now?”

he smiled “storage room.”

“storage? What could be left in storage? Rotten moth eaten fabrics?”

“come along and see.” luring her deeper. Passing by more doors along more halls to the large storage. The double doors leading to a place filled by mangled metal. Parts of broken machines clumsily brought into the room. Rotten threading somehow still in existence to spread across the room in various places. Each threading bearing a more white look to them. almost like the threading of a thick spider web carefully positioned around the junk.

“grey, I did tell you I didn't want a tetanus shot today.” somewhat joking between the walls of sharp metal towering around the place. Following grey around the maze of broken junk.

“don't worry, you'll live.” darkly joking about the true situation as he lead her into the final destination. Twisting around a few corners in waiting for the chance. Taking it the moment Beverly took her eyes off him to disappear. Leaving her lost in the maze to shed his disguise for the hunt. Making his way back to stalk up behind her for the one way out to be completely blocked. His golden glowing eyes catching her nervously wandering around after losing “grey”.

“How was this to start?” he wondered. Should he make his presence known with claws carving into her leg. Scare her a little and cripple her at the same time. Wouldn't be much of a chase with her limping. Such a waste of deliciously sweet blood on the dirty factory floor. Didn't have to be a gouging scratch it could instead be a broken leg. One of his boots smashing into the back of her leg would snap it like a toothpick. Maybe he should just start simple and see where it all leads. They had all night to be alone and surely the day as well with how far from the main town they were.

He only had to touch her and it would start. Stretching out his gloved hand out to touch the back of her neck. Stopping himself when she called out “his” name.

“grey?” her voice brimming with worry. A sound that seized his chest.

Taking in a deep breath he extended out his claws. To quiet her down and get it all over with.

Her voice turning more panicked as she searched for “him.” “grey?!”

he wanted to shout at her to shut up. The more she called his name the further he thought of how this would all fall. Surely she would keep calling for him. Begging desperately for his help. Afraid of why he wasn't coming to save her as she was torn to pieces. Crying to find out what happened to him as she died an agonizing death. Unknowing that he was right there causing all the pain. He froze standing behind her at the imagery.

Feeling some sort of pain in his chest, although he could see no injury. Could he do it? Could he carve into that delicate skin of hers and ruin all they built together these past 2 weeks?

Stretching out his clawed hand toward the back of her neck. he briefly brushed his fingertips against the soft skin. Startling her into whipping around in shock at seeing him standing there with a grin stretched across his face.

“fuck!” she cursed at him. “don't scare me like that!” lightly punching greys shoulder.

“heh-heh, sorry, took me a little longer to get through the loop.” he apologized.

“can we go explore another room? I feel like I am gonna get stabbed by a metal shard at any moment.”

“fiine, how about the processing room?”

“sounds good to me.” following him out of the maze.

Sighing to himself at what happened. He just couldn't do it. Something inside him telling him to protect her. Keep her close for a while longer. At least till the end of April fully arrives.

“you okay?” Beverly asked at his sudden change in energy.

“yes. Tired is all. Getting late and it was quiet the walk here.”

“yeah, at least we don't have classes tomorrow. Sleep the whole day away.”

“mhmm.” humming in agreement. Zoning out back to his thoughts when he heard a crackling creek behind him. Swinging his head around right as Beverly fell through the rotten floor. Having completely forgotten his zero weight form didn't have to worry of rot unlike Beverly. “Beverly?!” he shouted in looking down the hole. Seeing her laying on the next floor down to thankfully move with a groan. As she wasn't fully aware of her surroundings yet he jumped down the hole. Landing lightly by her as she sat up stiffly. “Beverly, are you okay?”

“ugh, yeah. Fuck, I don't think I landed on my arm right.” bringing up the limb close to her chest. He shined the flashlight on it for them both to examine the damage. A few scrapes and nothing obviously

broken, but he could tell Beverly was in a lot of pain.

“can you stand?” after she nodded he carefully helped her up. Arms ready to catch her if she ended up being unable.

“let’s get you to a hospital.” helping her leave the abandoned factory. Fetching them a taxi to drive off to the hospital. Along the way he thought about how badly this night had gone for both of him. What was he doing by letting her live? Isn’t killing her what he wanted these few weeks? Should he call all of this off to go back to his boring routine of failing hunts in the rain? A stinging pain in his chest at the thought of dumping Beverly. These feelings were all so new to him that it took some processing the whole drive. Helping Beverly out of the taxi to the hospital front desk. Looking over her injured wrist now swollen covered in bad bruising. Why was this pain drifting around his chest while also wanting so badly to fix her injury. Is this what affection was? It felt stronger than that with wanting to stick by her the entire trip in the hospital. Almost snapping at the doctors squeezing her wrist to cause pain.

Could he actually love her? No, he does not love. That was not in his nature, to think otherwise would be ridiculous. He was an apex predator of destruction meant to devour all things in his path. He was a monster who brought fear into all living creatures and nothing could change that. What a laugh to even think of him being with a human. An impossible task, or was it? How he was made had him stand at the top over everything, but it was lonely at the top. He was confident in everything he did up until now. Was even that true though? Now he was questioning everything about himself.

All those millions of years hunting humans. It used to be a rush, but as with everything it got old. He was in a deep rut of sleeping, eating, and repeat. The joy he claimed to adore so much on his hunts wasn’t really true after a while. He was in denial over it all on what was happening. He wasn’t happy, but bored and lonely. He wanted somebody to be around, but he always assumed he couldn’t love or even be friends with prey. That left him with no options aside from that awful turtle. He was a rare one within his dwindling species soon to be extinct. Created to help the universe divide its energy back from the decaying materials. By devouring it all as a burning wildfire would across a dead forest. He was hated, but did the job he was

made for perfectly.

Then those kids came along. He hated them with a burning passion. How dare his prey revolt after so long of him picking them off. Accepting their fate in the cursed town to the point they may as well be offering sacrifices. However, **it was different**. It had never happened before and suddenly there was this fresh air presented to him after years of breathing the stale air. It was **exciting** to be challenged by small children. He was having fun despite being beaten and battered down. After so many years he felt ... happiness.

It made a new found fire rage inside him. To keep this game going till one side died. maybe maybe another part of him didn't want them to die. It was fun playing this back and forth game of pain. They could beat him down all they wanted. He wouldn't really die, not his higher form of energy at least. It would just take him an extremely long time to recreate this earthly form. It simply was a game to him that cost him nothing, unlike the children at the time. His escape was to preserve the earthly form while also giving himself time to overcome the shock of it all. That first sensation of pain that hit him. He didn't know what it was at the time. A bolt of random electricity? No, it didn't connect right. It was pulsing like his lights would. It interfered greatly, whatever it was, with his healing. He had to pause himself to remove that bar in his head by hand. He'd never done that before. If it was a knife it would fall out on its own or break off among other injures humans managed to lash out in their dying moments.

Despite not wanting it to end he knew it had to. Those kids wouldn't stop until they got him and he refused to let them win. His own pride boosting him on to snap all their limbs. Devour them all into his deadlights to burn away into the collected universe. What else was to happen after all? He'd stop to try and make friends with them? Apologize for a broken arm, a devoured brother, the thousands of years of dead Derry towns folk or the multiple disasters?

No one would accept him.

Ever, and that's how it was.

He didn't truly want it to end, but it did. They all left to live happy

lives and here he was, stuck in Derry, stuck in his eternal rut. Sleeping down below to eventually resume his cycle. Then Beverly returned, bringing back along with her that inner fire he lost. He wanted more of this heat burning bright within him.

Why couldn't he change his nature? He was a **GOD** and as one he could change to whatever he wished! Being human wasn't so hard a task. On this day Pennywise the child eater was no more. now being replaced by Robert Grey living a normal life with Beverly.

Some issues would need figuring out. His special diet couldn't be changed. Beverly's aging he could stop, but that would be suspicious after a while. So instead he could slow it down to the point where her life was extended 3 times over. This would all fit with a little work put into it.

"grey?" Beverly's voice collecting his attention. Arm finished being wrapped in a wrist cast to have doctors moving onto all the cuts on her. Large rotten splinters carefully pulled from her one at a time into a metal bowl.

"yes?"

"you okay? You look sick."

"I'll be alright, I feel really sorry for what happened."

"it wasn't your fault grey." saying to help him feel less guilty. He knew however that it truly was his fault.

"I can get you a fancy dinner to make up for it. Help you rest and relax in your tent for the night."

"you don't have to do that." smiling at him. Beginning to feel bad herself at him looking sadly guilty. "why don't we have dinner at your place? My cold rained on tent won't be very fun for the both of us. We can spend more time together like you planned." perking him up to hear she wanted to visit **his** house.

"I can do that." smiling excitedly, although there was one big issue. "will you be alright on your own here? I need to go and get dinner for us before all the places close."

she nodded her head. "I'll live, don't worry, and it is gonna take another 15 minutes before they release me." waving him goodbye as he went off to get things ready.

Fetching food was the least of his worries when he needed a house first. "I need a place without people inside." The abandoned Neibolt house coming to mind first. "no! She knows about the house as much as I do. It would be far too suspicious a choice!" racing around the city for any abandoned houses he could fix up. Happy to find a large house up for sale that he just needed to rip the sign off the lawn. Using a bit of energy to unlock the doors, switch the electricity and water on. Inside he was frantic to make the place resemble a more human den he had been living in for years. Taking up magazines from a nearby gas station to replicate the rooms decorations to fancy placed furniture.

Using another meal planning magazine to set a huge meal on the dining table he conjured. Feeling his drained energy start to take a toll on his body. Happy to marvel over his finished work despite how his body felt. A large dining table with a huge homemade pizza on a round wood plate. Another plate of cheesy bread rolls sided by a pan of barely cooked meat balls he could easily eat. Rushing back out into the night to pick up Beverly from the hospital.

Helping her back to his home in another taxi. Stopping in front of a large two story house in the middle of the heights. "wow, you live here? All by yourself?" Beverly asked while being helped out of the taxi.

"yes." bringing her inside to the dining room.

"the food looks amazing. where'd you buy it so late? I thought only the diner would be open."

speaking proudly of his creation. "I made it all myself." smiling as he pulled her seat out for her. Leaving to return with plates for them both. She took some slices of pepperoni pizza covered in melted cheese stretching between the cut slices. He took a few large meatballs to dig into that caught the attention of Beverly.

"I don't think those meatballs are finished they look really pink."

pointing to one he broke apart. The outside dark and covered in a bright red sauce that made the bright pink meat stand out all the more.

“it's part of my diet.” he excused, which was true in a way. “its prescribed like this.” not knowing what he was talking about, but wanting it to sound more *official*.

“are you sure? what about bacteria or parasites in raw meat?”

“its prescribed after being treated. Heavily filtered by doctors.” he made up some more. Receiving a questioning eye from Beverly, but not pressing any further. “if you're sure.”

Beverly taking his hand on the table with her sprained one. Grey being extra cautious to gently hold it as they ate their warm meal through the rain pouring outside. “the storms are getting worse each day. Would you like to stay here instead of out in the tent?”

“I'll be fine.” squeezing his hand to reassure the concerned man. “if your so worried maybe we can hang out back here tomorrow.”

“id like that.” smiling through a bite of food. When they were both full he packed her the leftover pizza. Walking her home under a black umbrella to keep her cast safe in the rain.

The next morning he walked up to her tent to give a gentle tap at its door. Open by Beverly who was happy to see him. Yet he could tell she was worried over something she was about to say. “sorry, I actually need to cancel today. I realized last night that my working arm is in a cast and I really need to get an early start on my next dress.”

“arnt you on break?”

“yes, but we were assigned work over break. I originally was going to hold off on it until later in the week. I can't afford that now with my slowed sowing.”

“you have a sewing machine right? You can work at my home and finish it quickly.”

“really nice of you to offer, but I don't want to take over your home as a personal work space.”

“I don't mind. I broke your wrist so I should offer easy work space. Besides, you finish faster we can be together sooner.”

“mm.” she hummed in consideration. Looking back to a pile of fabrics messily sown using only one arm. “okay, but I'll strictly be working. I won't hang out until the dress is done.” receiving a nod from grey in understanding. Helping her transport her work back to his place to a small office room in the back. “thanks grey.” hugging him tightly in appreciation.

He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. “I'll bring you lunch later if you're still working.” leaving the office to leave her alone to work.

For the day he only disturbed her for lunch and dinner. Her taking every spare moment between meals to work at her machine while he sat in the living room. The place slowly warming from the heavy heated machine work. Beverly coming out by the time it was dark with exhaustion written all over her face.

“finish your dress?”

“no.” rubbing her eyes. “I got a lot done though. Calling it for tonight and heading back home to sleep.”

“you don't have to leave. You can sleep here too.” he offered

“it's a really nice offer, but I can't. Moving in already would be way too fast for me. I promise I'll be fine in my tent. Okay?” giving him a comforting hug.

“if you're sure.” hugging her back. “I'll walk you home.” leading the tired Beverly back to her camp.

Coming back the next morning to walk with her over to his new home. Their walk aside from meals being the only time they could spend together. Letting her spend the rest of her time focusing on work for school. Day after day she worked to the point of exhaustion through what was suppose to be a vacation. Grey was starting to worry for her on the last day after she skipped breakfast. Refusing to

take dinner to finish up the last of her work.

Attempting again to coax her into eating. “you should take a break and eat, Beverly.”

“i really cant. Schools tomorrow and the dress will be due then.” her sowing unstoppable to completing its task.

“I'll leave something for you in the fridge.” he wanted to stay up with her, but that wouldn't look normal. He needed to pretend he was going off to bed. Secluding himself in an upstairs bedroom to lay back on the bed. Paying attention to the sounds coming from the office space. The sewing machine going on up into the early hours of the morning. Stopping at one point thinking she had finished, but he didn't hear her exiting the office. Heading from his bedroom back downstairs to check in on her.

Opening the door to peek inside. “Bev?” finding her head laying down on her arms that rested crossed on the desk. “Bev?” he approached to her side. Checking over her he could tell she was sleeping after working so long. By the looks of her dress it was still unfinished despite the tiring hours she dropped into it.

“a few more seams left untouched. little time before her class starts and she said it needed to be finished. Should I wake her?” watching her sleep he didn't want to bother her. She needed the rest before her class. Looking down at his hand he stretched out his fingers into long slender black ones. Cautiously taking the dress to thread it the rest of the way himself. His work carried out far faster than any human machine could attempt to do. Proudly looking over the finished dress made up of far better threading then whatever the humans made.

Checking back on the clock he knew it was past the time Beverly was to wake. Setting the dress down next to her to seem untouched. Waking her in a gentle shake to her shoulders. “hey, it's time to wake up!” hearing her let out a tired groan in slowly waking.

Mumbling through her remaining sleep. “what time is it?”

“its 6:45.” the time startling her awake.

“shit! I slept in!” frantically scrambling to collect herself. “can I use your shower?”

“of course it's the first door upstairs.”

“and can you do me a big favor and fetch my bag from my tent? It has fresh clothes in it.”

“yes, don't worry.”

“thanks!” she rushed up stairs. When she was busy in the shower he took the brief moment to fetch her bag. Appearing back to wait down stairs for a while to make it seem like he left. Instead of appearing instantly here and back again. Steeping in front of the closed bathroom door to knock on it.

“got you your bag!” saying in front of the door.

“its open. Toss it in and I'll be out in a few minutes!”

doing as he was told by slightly cracking the door open just enough to toss the bag in. closing it to make a quick breakfast for them downstairs. Creating an easy hold able meal of small meat pies to go with something the two of them could eat. Giving his offering to Beverly when she rushed down to grab her other bag of school work. Folding her dress away into the bag without noticing it was finished.

“made breakfast.” handing the pie wrapped in a paper towel.

“oh perfect! We can eat it along the way, lets go!” biting into it as they rushed out of the house. Finishing it off by the time they made it. “good luck with your classes!” waving him goodbye when they needed to separate. He waved goodbye as he wandered off out of sight to disappear back to the house. Debating on what he was to do now in his new human life.

“hunt for a meal in this weather?” looking at the rain passing the window. “... what am I doing?” questioning himself. “can I do this? Can a monster become human? What would *the other* think? Would he even allow this to go on? I still have to do my duty's don't I? Earth caused enough of a distraction, but being fully with Beverly means I have an even smaller window to temporarily leave this universe. If he

relies so much on me working he should have thought about that before dwindling my species to death. I mustn't be that needed in the grand universe anymore. I can stop being a devourer of worlds that was feared by every living thing. I can settle by Beverly's side and let my history die a silent secret that even Derry will heal from after a time."

he didn't know why, but there was a strange relief over him. As if a weight had been lifted after pretending to be something for the longest time. He had simpler things to worry about now, like appearing human as much as possible. Work toward convincing Beverly he was the one to stay with. Keeping thoughts of rejection to the furthest part in the back of his mind. Leaving the house on a mission to find a fancy gift Beverly couldn't possibly reject.

Picking up a shiny gift that caught his attention amongst many other pieces protected by glass. Using a bit of energy to trick the seller into seeing a folder of bills. with a small gift bag hidden in his pocket he made his way back to the college campus. Waiting outside under the stormy skies for Beverly's class to let out. The rain falling down as she was able to leave the class flashing her glares between their rumor mutterings. Hugging grey as she gave the exciting news of how her dress presentation.

"the dress came out perfectly! Even though I barely remember finishing it." walking off alongside grey.

Grey taking his own interest more than usual over how well the class went. "what grade did you get?" her grade may as well have been judgment on his own threading skills.

"the next dress is just attaching lace onto something pre-made. it won't be due for another month so I can work slower now." she kept happily explaining her class.

"uh-huh ... what grade did you get?"

"we also got news of the scholarships after that runway show. I got a few of the smaller ones that will cover the class deposits and all the materials. That takes care of the bigger expenses for the next semester and all through another two years."

“wonderful ... was your grade an A?”

“nah, I got a B, but that's not bad. At least it's not a C after all that late night crunching.”

“yes.” hiding his deep displeasure that had him thinking of what idiot gave that grade. “a B?! Some idiot dare give me a B?! I'll give that teacher a B! **Big Boot** up his ass!” that will happen another day. Currently he was focusing back to Beverly. Saddened that she no longer would need to be at his house even if only for work. “i got you something.” reaching into his pocket.

“oh, what?” surprised by the sight of a marvelous small black box. Losing her voice at the sight of a shiny silver necklace attached to a bright ruby teardrop. Surrounding the teardrop was a, equally as bright silver, raven spreading its wings upward.

“like it?” he smiled. “want me to put it on?”

“no”

“no?!” taken aback by her reply.

“i-i can't accept it grey. It's way too much to accept so early in our relationship.”

“but I got it for you. Do you not like it? I can get you something else.”

“I love it and it's super nice, but it's way too much. How about a movie night at your place instead?” shifting the spoiled mood to something more positive.

“yes.” agreeing to that. It got her over to his home despite the rejected gift. Pocketing the necklace to give another day when it wasn't so early.

Heading to town for a bag of movies to marathon for the night. a fresh hot pizza picked up along the way they wrapped in plastic bags to prevent rain from soaking it. Grey happy to get a pizza covered in 5 different meats layered in stretchy cheese. The pizza slices offered at fairs weren't nearly this good or as freshly hot. Paying more

attention between the food and Beverly rather than the movies playing on the large tv. Holding down a purr when Beverly snuggled up to him on the couch. Late in the night they had finished off the pizza along with most movies.

Beverly having trouble staying awake stretched up from her place on the couch. "I think it's time for me to head back home."

"its really late, you could stay here for the night." offering to try again in convincing her, but again she refused.

"I'll see you in the morning grey, goodnight." smiling a wave goodbye out the door. Watching her walk off into the night from the living room window.

Alone in the house he slowly paced around without plans to do much else. Bored enough by the loneliness inside he headed out to hunt. Managing a successful catch of a stumbling drunk passing out under a bridge. Returning home to settle on the couch until morning to then go greet Beverly. The morning blue sky lighting up the dark insides of the house. Thinking of what he would get Beverly for breakfast.

"I should pick something grand to impress her. A large breakfast plate of cheesy omelet wouldn't be too hard to make. That won't be very good on the rush to school though. A breakfast sandwich would be best to carry along in one hand. Egg, cheese, something green that human love to drop on perfectly good meat." getting up to start preparing the small meal early. Using the simple tools he created to cook an egg.

The scent of something burning having him switch off the stove before finishing the egg. Scenting the egg, and going by looks, he could tell it wasn't coming from the meat. Something else burning he knew was impossible off being disallowed under his power. The scent turning stronger twisting to not only being a burnt smell, but specifically burnt flesh of a human. Questioning its origins he followed it closer to the front of the house. The burnt smell getting stronger the longer he lingered by the front of the house.

Frantic knocks beating on his front door having him approach. Although in no rush to open it for some stranger. Ready to turn back

to the kitchen when a frantic voice followed the banging knocks.

“grey!” it was Beverly's pained voice. “grey! Grey, please!” her voice sobbing by the time he opened the door for her. Standing on his covered porch was Beverly soaked and shivering from the thunderstorm raging that early morning. Clothes covered in burnt black patches the same as her exposed arms. Some burns reaching through the clothes to mark her skin. At the sight of him she embraced him for heavily needed comfort. Body collapsing in his arms as he hugged her back. Helping her inside to the couch for a place to rest her stressed body.

“she must have ran all the way here through the pouring rain.” thinking as he comforted her on the couch. Holding her close as she cried into his chest a shivering mess. Delicate around the wounds he clearly smelt earlier past the thundering rain. Wanting to help he calmed her enough to fetch her some towels and a blanket. Shivering although no longer sobbing he could finally ask her an important question.

“what happened?”